

HOUSING AND EXTREME POVERTY  
THE CASE OF ROMA COMMUNITIES

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# **HOUSING AND EXTREME POVERTY THE CASE OF ROMA COMMUNITIES**

English version by  
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## **Foreword**

This book presents the results of a nationwide study on housing and living conditions in Romany communities in state of extreme poverty. We have carried our research on 36 communities, of which 25 were presented in comprehensive reports. The direct experience provided sufficient material to draw up a typology of housing meant as a tool for community planning and building of low cost, social houses.

In our opinion, the process of building should not limit to a design guide combining the description of some procedures adapted to extreme poverty. In fact, both the architects and builders should work together with the local authorities and offer sustainable solutions aimed to fight segregation and promote social insertion. For the poor Romany, the solutions do not mean a case of political definition or debate of ideas, as it is for the rest of the society, but an extremely urgent matter underlined by technical and organizational aspects.

Our major concern was to find the guidelines for the interventions promoted by local administration and the organizations working with the Romany, strictly implying the construction of habitats and houses, directed to immediate action and implementation of some projects. The intentions were gathered in two chapters: one combining intervention principles and other describing intervention scenarios. We think they can provide good guidance to designers and decision makers in their action. Moreover, they try to avoid the mistakes that have been done so far. We are persuaded by the fact that we could only fight nationwide extreme poverty by approaching a multitude of solutions and possibilities.

We have repeatedly emphasized the concept of extreme poverty through our work. In fact, that is the essential problem of the communities we have studied. Our research extends its conclusions to other marginal communities of diverse origin and structure that share the same economic and living conditions with the Romany.

This work was drafted in 2004-2005 by a team coordinated by Căţalin Berescu and Mariana Celac within the Research, Design, Expertise, and Consulting Center of Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism of Bucharest; its beneficiary was the Ministry of Transport, Constructions, and Tourism. In our effort to translate sociologists' experience to architects and introduce the themes of living and planning in the area of socio-human science, we invited a sociologist, Mrs. Oana Ciobanu, an ethnographer, Mr. Cosmin Manolache, and an economist, Mrs. Simona Ilie. Our work sessions were also attended by other researcher that generously helped us to tune our conclusions.

There are two further remarks as to style matters. First, in Romanian we chose to spell "rom" and not "rroma" as this is the latest choice of the main Romany organizations. We also used "Romany" and not "Roma" according to the dictionaries, except for the titles. As for the pictures, they are documentary, not journalistic. However, their dramatic image impressed the viewers deeply. Our point is that we did our best to be objective as much as we could by avoiding those wretched aspects that has always fueled the aesthetic representation of poverty. Therefore, we beg the readers to credit our objective and temperate attitude. The people we encountered in those miserable hut welcomed us full of hope, and that urges us to avoid simple compassion and reach true understanding.

Acknowledgments to: Ion Mincu University for the logistic support, Marcel Dediu from "Împreună" Agency for an interesting exchange of ideas; Mrs. Bogdana Tudorache for her answers concerning mental hygiene; Mrs. Celia Ghyka for prompt information; Mrs. Angela Kovacs, architect in Tîrgu Mures, for her careful guidance to the best examples in our study; Peter Balogh and Lenghel, the leaders of Tg. Mures community, for their patient and wonderful stories; Mr. Ion Toader, the mayor of Cetateni village for his accurate historic information; Mr. Nicolae Constantin, the mayor of Contesti for his love for all the children of the village; Mr. Tiberiu Deszi, director of Romania Renaitre Association from Orastie for his exquisite guidance and kindness; family Sorin and Liliana Cristea from Satu Mater for their generosity in approaching the poverty issue; Mrs. Rita Toma, for her warm support and substantial help in getting in touch with the international cases; Mrs. Dana Bodnaras for turning ministry bureaucracy into a humane activity; Mr. Sergiu Lungu and Mr. Dorin Alexandrescu, the mayor and assistant-mayor respectively of Dorohoi for their determination in facing the issue of poor Romanies; Mrs. Mariea Ionescu for her effective decisions, and Mrs. Architect Ileana Tureanu for her trusting us.

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**Cluj, Pata Rât - „Dallas“**

He is 6 years old, with impeccable haircut, flippant, and rather aggressive. “What are you up to here? Well, take me a picture, come on, and take me a picture!” We do, we offer him an undivided attention. “What about that mattock?” “Looking for beer cans”. “Why didn’t you wash your face?” “Come on, I did, I did! Why don’t you show me the picture? Show me the picture!” At Pata Rât there is but one well for the 600 inhabitants. Obviously, the child is well looked after but also exploited by his family. He seems to understand that the society is no more interested in him except for that digital picture, so he doesn’t ask for money. He was taught to work, not to beg, and obviously knows something about pictures on LCD screens. What would he have thought of us, if we hadn’t had a digital camera?

## A definition of poverty

Eradication of poverty is the theme of the United Nations Organization for the 1996-2007 decade. It seems that Romania is not in the world's top in this respect; thus, it is placed long behind many African, Asian, and South-American states as both absolute dimensions and visibility of extreme poverty. Neither the political nor the public discourses follow these world trends to approach poverty openly and technically; with us they are dressed in Christian, fatalist clothes, being subordinated to a vague humanism. In a way, the poverty theme overlaps the poverty that governed us in the last ten years of Ceausescu's age and the first ten years of transition. This is why we perceive it rather as internal fact than a political priority and we think we know all about it.

Therefore, the Romanians are quite subjective in this respect, also governed by a universal and trans-historic relativism in matters of poverty. Whenever the theme appears in the large political-economic frameworks as they are those of the World Bank or UNO, the discussion reveals a certain resistance as to the understanding of the poverty theme.

To give a formal aspect to our analysis, we appeal to the classic categories used by the National Plan Anti Poverty and Promotion of Social Insertion.

- **Poverty** is defined as "lack of resources and skills in relation to the demands of decent living".
- **Sever poverty** is characterized by major and persistent neediness that affects the capacity to function within society on a long-term.
- **Extreme poverty** is there where daily living is under threat. As housing condition, that means the instability of the building, distance from the main locality, environment toxicity, lack of space, and almost complete absence of utilities.

Recent terminology (World Bank) operates with the term of **food poverty**, characteristic of 1.2 million Romanians, followed by extreme poverty, characteristic of 2.4 millions, and ends by drawing the line of consumption poverty for 1.5 million lei (45\$, in December 2002), under which there were 6.3 million people.

To analyze poverty and its stages, we should focus on the unequal indices that define the target group and the population as a whole. This is why, our research appealed to the data published by the studies of the Anti-poverty and Promotion of Social Insertion Commission (ASPSIC), Research Institute for Life Quality (RILQ), and National Institute of Statistics (NIS). The position of the individuals on the scale was done with the existing data with a view to find the size of the problem we face with, through estimates. There are some logical statements about **inequality**



showing that:

1. the more the inequality is, the more the poverty
2. the more the initial poverty is, the more reduced the rate

of growth and implicitly, the rate of poverty decreasing.

According to ASPSIC studies, Romania is undergoing a process of deeper inequality. In consumption terms, the poverty is temporary and “not so deep”, meaning that the average poor are 75% under the poverty line.

In terms of housing, the extreme poverty of housing is stable, meaning that house poverty, that is, need of space, equipment, stability, etc, is more serious through the lasting effects it produces than consumption poverty.

**Housing poverty** is a state of permanent lack of space and utilities specific to normal living. This neediness causes permanent consequences on living, meaning absence of sleep, hygiene, intimacy (with direct effect of reproduction health, favoring sexual abuse), serious perturbation or absence of education and information, a low capacity to acquire resources to survive and develop (household appliances, food, clothes, tools).

**Extreme housing poverty** is the state of housing crisis. The houses are structurally insecure, poorly built, insecure in legal terms of property, and characterized by a serious absence of minimal hygienic conditions. Those living under such conditions are constantly threatened to lose their shelter, belongings, health, and even their life.

The extreme housing poverty, especially in the Romany communities, show to further aspects: precariousness of the house itself, and precariousness of the community milieu. Another dimension to poverty definition is **vulnerability**, which governs the investment strategies in the living space; it decisively determines the perception on one's own condition.

**Vulnerability** represents a risk to slip into *housing poverty* by diminishing the living standard (cutting off the utility mains, increased number of family members) or *extreme housing poverty* by losing one's house due to its serious dilapidation or total destruction.

The nature and presence of housing poverty are clearly reflected in the statistics at hand; however, by corroborating more indices, one can reach the conclusion that there is a “hard nucleus” of around one million people that concentrate a set of major needs shown by various indicators. It is not the goal of our study to find the number of Romanians in various stages of poverty; yet, we thought it was essential to define the first statement of current state of poverty, where we said that the problem was characterized by

its dimension. Out of the classical analysis methods of poverty: comparison between the poor-the non-poor; comparison between groups of poor people; comparison between the poverty dynamic of a group over a period and the analysis of poverty factors, we chose the forth, for the first that is based on statistics by appealing to the accessible data. In the Romany case, we have to discuss also the **community poverty**. This is a historic heritage in terms of segregation and a phenomenon in full swing (see “new poverty”).

**Community poverty** represents a case of exclusion of a community from general well-being, manifesting through position outside the majority territory on inappropriate land; absence of access road; absence of property; absence/limited access to public utilities; absence of public transport; reduced access to public services; absence of public security; absence of urban regulations.

Community poverty can be completed with the concept of multi-dimensional poverty or “new poverty”. Here is its definition in the RILQ report of November 2004:

The “new poverty” is deep, multi-dimensional, chronic poverty that will no “pass” with economic growth, and it is the concern of both European developed countries and the United States of America. From the point of view of “new poverty”, the urban poverty is the key problem of poverty in Romania.

The studies on “new poverty” (coordinated by Stănculescu and Berevoescu, 2004) show that in both Romania and developed countries, “the new” poverty is associated to weaker family ties and weakening social cohesion, non-participation and social marginalization, “neighborhood culture”, ethnicity tendencies that concentrate the poor in segregated territories. Unlike consumption poverty, “the new poverty” is a state of multiple privations that can only be overcome by an intervention from the outside. In Romania’s case the study operates with the concept of “extreme poverty”, three-dimensionally defined according to:

- (a) household income and consumption under the national poverty threshold;
- (b) absence of housing security, meaning that the household is not owned;
- (c) poor belongings, of two long-term goods in towns, and one good in the rural area.

If consumption poverty is concentrated in the rural area, “the new poverty” associated with social exclusion is specific to the urban area. If consumption poverty is decreasing as an effect of economic growth, “the new poverty” is developing as an effect of increasing inequality and weakening of social cohesion. If consumption poverty characterizes the living standard of millions of Romanians, “the new poverty” is experienced by some hundred thousands of Romanians for the moment, mostly, townspeople that became poor. If consumption poverty is temporary, “the new poverty” represents a state of neediness that became permanent; it involves the absence of routine that would confer safety and predictability, being focused on today’s living with no perspective whatsoever.

ASPSIC, a report drawn up by RILQ., “Urban Poverty and Rural Poverty”, coordinated by Manuela Sofia Stănculescu; research team: Pascariu Gabriel, Pop Luana Miruna, Stănculescu Manuela Sofia, Stoica Laura; November, 2004



**Persani, Brasov:** 1 senior, 7 adults under 25, 12 children.

„Where are the old people?

What old people? Aaah... They died!“

# The Size of the Problem

## An estimate of poverty – methodological aspects

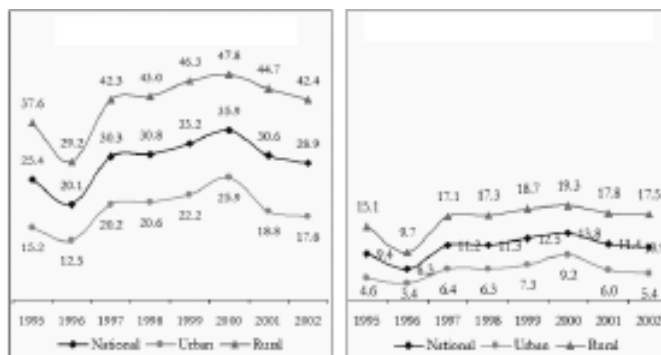
The problem of poverty and its stages (living below the poverty level, severe poverty, and extreme poverty) and the quantitative estimate of the social group affected have posed some methodological difficulties as concerns the data gathering and the problem dimension. The existing sources, essentially economic, sustain the way in which poverty is defined within the system of gathering and aggregation of statistic data, as well as the general perception of poverty as “lack of money”. All the studies, documents, gathering of primary data, social inquiries and the reports of national and international institutions, the studies carried out by foreign specialists, define poverty in monetary terms (World Bank, FSD Opinion Polls, national statistics, ASPSIC and RILQ, to quote just the most respected sources).

Thus, the ASPSIC report quotes the report of the World Bank and finds 6.3 million poor people, of which 1.2 in absolute poverty (or food poverty according to the World Bank). Out of the total amount, 2.1 million live in cities and 4.2 in the country.

**Table Consumption poverty according to residence**

|                             | <b>Food poverty</b> | <b>Extreme poverty</b> | <b>Total</b>     |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Poverty threshold WB(LEI)   | 872,005             | 1,060,658              | <b>1,535,370</b> |
| <b>NATIONAL</b>             |                     |                        |                  |
| Number of poor people       | <b>1,210,724</b>    | <b>2,366,110</b>       | <b>6,265,186</b> |
| Amount of poor people       | 5.6%                | 10.9%                  | 28.9%            |
| Average consumption deficit | 0.0114              | 0.0239                 | 0.0759           |
| <b>URBAN</b>                |                     |                        |                  |
| Number of poor people       | <b>317,210</b>      | <b>634,117</b>         | <b>2,080,042</b> |
| Amount of poor people       | 2.7%                | 5.4%                   | 17.6%            |
| Average consumption deficit | 0.0059              | 0.0119                 | 0.0417           |
| <b>RURAL</b>                |                     |                        |                  |
| Number of poor people       | <b>893,514</b>      | <b>1,731,992</b>       | <b>4,185,144</b> |
| Amount of poor people       | 9.1%                | 17.5%                  | 42.4%            |
| Average consumption deficit | 0.0179              | 0.0383                 | 0.1167           |

Note: The household welfare is based on total consumption expenditure per adult. According to the Population and Housing Census of March 2002. Poverty thresholds expressed in prices, December 2002. Source: *Romania: Poverty Evaluation*, World Bank, 2003.

**Picture** Dynamic of total and extreme poverty according to residences, 1995-2002

Source: *Romania: Poverty evaluation*, World Bank, 2003.

The researchers of RILQ add several characteristics to the data concerning the dynamics:

1. it is **extended** (29% of the population in 2002); 2. it is **elastic** as economic growth; 3. it is **decreasing**, yet social inequality is growing; 4. it is **superficial**, because the average distance between the household consumption and the poverty threshold is relatively small and great amounts of population are immediately below the poverty threshold, that is, they can “enter” or “get out” of poverty at rather small variations of income; 5. it is mainly **temporary**, not permanent; for the 1995-1998 period, only 22% of the poor could not get out during the years of economic growth.

ASPSIC, a report drawn up by RILQ., “Urban Poverty and Rural Poverty”, coordinated by Manuela Sofia Stănculescu; research team: Pascariu Gabriel, Pop Luana Miruna, Stănculescu Manuela Sofia, Stoica Laura; November, 2004

“The Romany population is the only one with higher poverty rate than in 1995 and at greater distance as to other categories. In 2003, the Romanies show the lowest decrease of only 2%, two or three times less than other nationalities.

#### Differences concerning poverty rate

|                  | 1995 | 2000 | 2003 | % 1995 | % 2000 |
|------------------|------|------|------|--------|--------|
| <b>Romanian</b>  | 24,7 | 34,7 | 24,4 | -1,3   | -29,8  |
| <b>Hungarian</b> | 21,9 | 31,2 | 14,9 | -32,0  | -52,3  |
| <b>Romany</b>    | 73,9 | 83,0 | 76,8 | 4,0    | -7,5   |
| <b>Other</b>     | 30,5 | 37,0 | 18,6 | -39,0  | -49,8  |

The Romany population is highly vulnerable despite its constant decline over the last years, yet less obvious in the general population. However, the other nationalities are below the level for the first time in 2003, with the lowest poverty rate: 1995, 1996. Out of the Romany children, 80% are poor” (ASPSIC report, 2003).

## Extreme housing poverty

According to this study, the definition of poverty and its stages by consumption is not enough. It does not include housing and factors of community environment. The workshops that took place during the studies revealed at least two factors that essentially affect the life of the people of disadvantaged social groups – the housing conditions and the community milieu.

More complicated evaluation problems appear in relation to the isolation of the extreme poverty group within the poverty categories – the group that is mostly connected to precarious or life threatening conditions in extremely derelict sites as to environment (stability, soil contamination, flooding problems, air pollution, wastes, etc) facing also household waste evacuation, proximity of buildings, access to roads, etc

To provide a more exact dimension of the social groups affected by extreme poverty, by including in these categories – besides the monetary terms of current evaluations – the spatial factors (data about housing and community state) we interpreted some results from the population and housing census of 2002; they were checked against the (variable) estimates from the accessible evaluations so far.

Thus, we studied some data concerning:

- Living conditions in one-room or two-room apartments
- With living density of minimum 4 people per room
- Houses with no access to public utilities or access to only one
- Population living in temporary dwelling

## Extreme housing poverty

- The data of the 2002 census proves the extreme housing poverty (characterized by sq m/person situated between 3.1 and 3.5 sq m/person covers **930.000 people**
- In this category you can find households made of:
  - One family nucleus (about 82.5%) **767.250 people**
  - Two family nuclei (about 15,9 %) **147.870 people**
  - Three family nuclei (about 10,3%) **95.790 people**
- There is a group of approximately **24,800 people** for which the poverty indicator is placed around **1.5 sq m/pers.**
- Approximately **13.000 people** live in improvised or “emergency” buildings, as the census calls them – it is similar to *the homeless* situation.

The figures for each category were checked against the data of extreme poverty of the existing documents. The resulted figure points to a logical and methodological estimate. The further studies will include, we hope, the definition of extreme poverty by including the criteria connected to housing and community situation. This operation could change the existing estimate. Meanwhile, a better knowledge of community poverty could sustain the prospective tendencies in the field of extreme poverty and the impact of various policies on the phenomenon development.

So far, **the result of the actions that were carried out was not significant. With only 100 houses per year in the last 5 years (an optimistic estimate though) the population flow to settlements/ghettoes and reproduction rate of extreme poverty could not and will not be counterattacked.** Moreover, the absence of monitoring after the houses were given to their tenants, including Romanies, and some comprehensive actions of social integration, though much money was put into it, leads to the conclusion that all the effort was just a demonstration that will dilute or cancel with time.

**The situation of community equipment confirms the estimate.** From the aggregates proposed by the census by comparing the figures indicating the equipment of houses with centralized installations (electricity, water, sewerage) we find:

- 225.000 houses with 431.000 tenants have no access to community equipment (neither electricity)
- 80.000 houses with 320.000 tenants have limited access to running water without sewerage
- 256.600 houses with 711.300 tenants have the privy outside

The correlation of figures measuring the presence or absence of utilities, the equipment, or facilities, with the indices of income, occupation, or building quality, which can be done in a study focused on this issue, would lead to figures that are more exact. However, we believe that a calculated figure of 1,000,000 people that need housing is credible. The problem of dimension and the meager means could be successfully used, in terms of result solidity, for the first thousand cases.

## THE 2002 CENSUS OF POPULATION AND HOUSING

One room houses inhabited by households/families of at least 4 people:

|                                       | <u>TOTAL</u> | <u>URBAN</u> | <u>RURAL</u> |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Number of houses                      | 137.000      | 61.200       | 75.100       |
| Room area m <sup>2</sup>              | 2.248.000    | 1.098.000    | 1.155.000    |
| Number of people                      | 667.000      | 291.000      | 371.000      |
| Inhabitable area m <sup>2</sup> /pers | 3,37         | 3,77         | 3,11         |

Two room houses, inhabited by households/families of at least 8 people:

|                                       | <u>TOTAL</u> | <u>URBAN</u> | <u>RURAL</u> |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Number of houses                      | 28.800       | 8.100        | 1185         |
| Room area m <sup>2</sup>              | 846.000      | 249.000      | 595.000      |
| Number of people                      | 265.000      | 74.000       | 188.000      |
| Inhabitable area m <sup>2</sup> /pers | 3,19         | 3,36         | 3,16         |

The following situation concerns one room houses, inhabited by 10 and more than 10 people:

|                                       | <u>TOTAL</u> | <u>URBAN</u> | <u>RURAL</u> |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Number of houses                      | 2200         | 720          | 1480         |
| Room area m <sup>2</sup>              | 36.700       | 12.400       | 24.300       |
| Number of people                      | 24.800       | 8100         | 16.700       |
| Inhabitable area m <sup>2</sup> /pers | 1,47         | 1,53         | 1,45         |

The following situation concerns two room houses, inhabited by 10 and more than 10 people:

|                                       | <u>TOTAL</u> | <u>URBAN</u> | <u>RURAL</u> |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Number of houses                      | 8.200        | 2.400        | 5.800        |
| Room area m <sup>2</sup>              | 243.100      | 73.100       | 169.000      |
| Number of people                      | 93.000       | 27.500       | 65.600       |
| Inhabitable area m <sup>2</sup> /pers | 2,61         | 2,65         | 2,58         |

The figures were rounded by 10.

As concerns the temporary houses or in "emergency" houses, the census offers the following situation:

|                            | <u>TOTAL</u>  | <u>PERMANENT<br/>BUILDINGS</u> | <u>TEMPORARY<br/>BUILDINGS</u> |
|----------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Number of units            | 4.300         | 2.300                          | 1.000                          |
| Number of rooms            | 5.600         | 3.100                          | 2.500                          |
| Room area                  | 74.300        | 42.500                         | 31.800                         |
| Number of people           | <b>13.800</b> | 6.700                          | 7.100                          |
| Inhabitable area SQ M/pers | <b>5,38</b>   | <b>6,34</b>                    | <b>4,36</b>                    |



## Village/town migration

*The Romany migration has undergone a reversed tendency as compared to the rest of population: if those who could find in the villages, in their families, some possibilities to round up their income (terrain, house), the Romany lacking minimum resources tend to migrate to towns, where they can find marginal opportunities.*

(The social support for the Romany population, Romania's Government, ASPSIC)

|                              | Village to Town | Town to Village |
|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Total population             | 22,0%           | 28,4%           |
| Romany                       | 31,2%           | 13,5%           |
| Romany (migration intention) | 29,7%           | 8,8%            |

The speedier rhythm of the Romanies migration to towns, especially to cities, will lead to the extension of poverty *ghettoes*, violence, and delinquency. The urban segregation of the Romanies will inevitably increase, including the negative consequences.

## The housing conditions

A steady decline of housing conditions in the case of the Romanies will be a characteristic of the near future due to a convergent complex of negative factors:

- The existence of a substantial generation of children and youth that cannot get any support from their parents, meaning, no house. On a medium and long term, the birth rate will be higher as compared to the rest of the population.
- Intense migration to town increases the demand of housing that cannot be covered.
- The rapid process of house deterioration, of those inhabited by the Romanies, with no chance of rehabilitation.

The consequence of these processes is extremely severe:

- 16.5% of the Romany families live in rented houses
- 21% live in illegally built houses on terrains for which they have no property documents

## Support for house building

For a long period, most Romanies will not be able to buy or rent a civilized house.

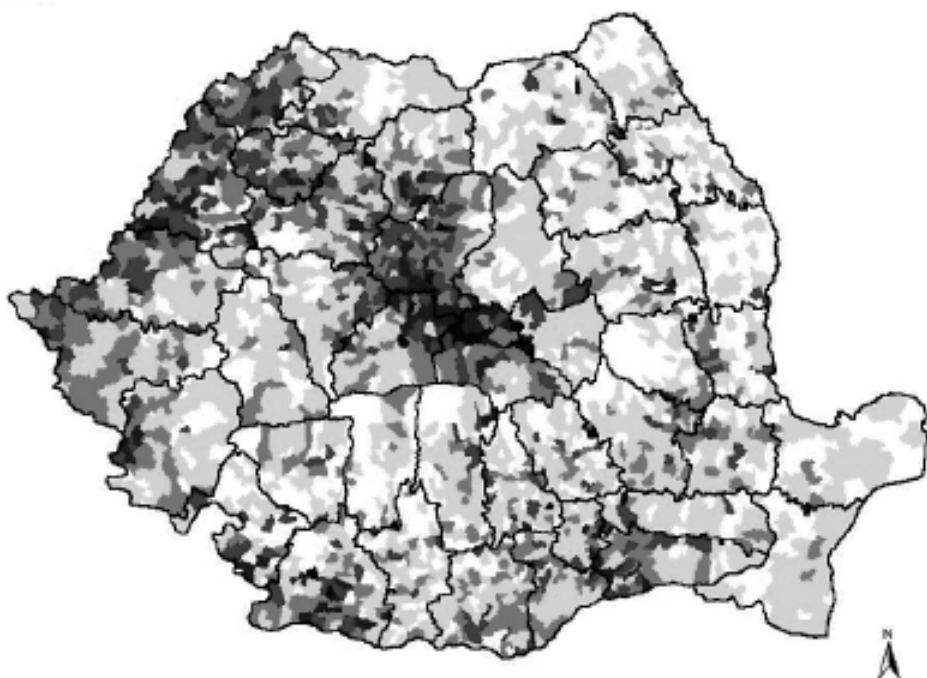
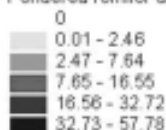
Two kinds of solutions could be considered:

- To support the Romanies who wish to buy a house in cooperative system, contributing mainly with labour.
- To build low-cost houses, even with lower comfort in the first stage, yet more civilized than the current one; the beneficiaries could be asked to participate into their building and maintenance.

The geographic distribution of the Romany population, as shown in the 1992 and 2002 censuses, points to higher concentrations in vast territories. Higher percentages can be found in the cities from the center (Brasov, Sibiu, Mures counties) followed by those in the west (Satu Mare, Sălaj, Bihor, Arad) and the villages from the southern part of Dolj and Mehedinti counties. Nationwide, in towns (2002) the Romany population is less present than in villages (1.8% as to 3.2%). The big agglomerations of Romanies are found in villages; only eight small towns present 10% of the population.

Territory distribution of the Romany population

Pondereea romilor din populatia totala (%)





### **Dorohoi, The historic center**

The first floor was inhabited by a family with four children. Although a temporary consolidation would have only asked for two pillars and some boards, no one did it for 9 months, as long as our monitoring took place. The local actors - Town Hall, State Inspectorate in Constructions, and some of the tenants - did not even consider the solution of partial demolition. The building collapsed recently, with no victims, fortunately.

Mr. Mihai Grossu, a Romany activist (see photo), accompanied us to their neighbors, a family with 7 children, all with tuberculosis. The monitoring together with Semiramida Balan, the local expert in Romany matters revealed a more precise family structure than that in the town hall documents; it shows, however, more people in need. The conclusion is that the data that a designer is supposed to get from the town hall can only be gathered by a thorough field research, and the presence of community mediators is vital. The architecture commission that do not consider such information are simple annexes of an investment process lacking the necessary orientation towards the needy.

# Dwelling Conditions in the Poverty Stricken Romany Communities

## General Remarks on the Subject-Matter

From the very beginning, we should pinpoint that these communities are rather affected by poverty than by the ethnic criterion. The identity problem and the solutions to it are given by *the poverty factor*. Although it could be discussed as being a historical determinant of the present condition, the *ethnic factor* brings along few data and only partially contributes to the description of the dwelling problem and configuration of some solution scenarios.

**The emphasis on the ethnic factor in the intervention programs only shuns the social insertion of the poor Romany.**

The problem of poverty of the Romany is a national issue, both in quantifiable terms (dimension, extent) and in the complexity and force of the phenomenon. Although it is included in the national and European strategies more than often, the general public is hardly aware of it, while the mass media present it superficially; additionally, at the level of local government, it comes as a set of prejudices and stereotypes.

**Both the stereotypes and a chronic lack of interest govern the current actions by indefinitely postponing a real solution, in terms of sustainable development.**

We propose a set of statements regarding the nature of this issue to get a general view on the problem:

- **The problem is big (1)**

There are almost 1.5 mil. Romany living in Romania (Zamfir, Preda, 1998), out of which almost one million lives in extremely difficult conditions, their houses counting as a determinant factor of social exclusion. For approximately 25,000 people the house means an improvised, shaky shelter, while for 265,000, although the building they inhabit can be labeled as 'a house', the difference between needs and facts rather qualifies it as a mere shelter. For the next category of almost 770,000 people, the living conditions do not provide for minimal development possibilities.

**Poverty is "elastic", meaning that it maintains its size and form under the economic development pressure. Today, the number of those able to overcome this condition is smaller than that of the people who belong to it and the natural growth of this population.**

- **The problem is grave (2)**

Those undergoing extreme poverty are somewhat blocked at this social and economic level. The general economic development is never reflected in the lifestyle improvement; quite the contrary, it triggers their transition from severe to extreme poverty, since they lose job opportunities. This serious condition is rather described by the vicious circle consisting in the absence of appropriate housing, personal sanitation and sleep, access to jobs, education, sanitary services, and information.

**All people and households under this condition badly need assistance to overcome it. There is a chronic lack of resources and the gap between them and the rest of society increases as much as the number of those experiencing such living conditions (statistic data only confirm it).**

- **The problem is widely spread (3)**

It is the result of the forgotten heritage of the period of Romany slavery and, at the same time, of transition difficulties. The recent wave of forced settling down proved fatal to their nomadic lifestyle and made them spread on the Romanian territory rather homogeneously. During our research, we have been bombed with data concerning poor Romany and their location in the country. Based on empirical observation, our conclusion was that no matter where you were, you only needed fifteen minutes to reach a community of poor Romany. It is worth noting that all the Eastern European countries share this problem.

**All the Romanian towns and most of the villages have one or more communities of poor Romany.**

- **The problem is not visible (4)**

It is not pleasant to get in touch with extreme poverty. This is why only few have a deep knowledge of the problems of the poor. Being associated with danger, illness, smell, it shapes some stereotypes and trigger some behavioral reactions that make the dialogue difficult, if not limit it. If you are an outsider, you are challenged by the most visible side of the life of these people; they have their own capacity of reaction and self-representation. In any community, there are only few who are open and willing to speak about their state. When you come more often, you can see that many can hardly express themselves, there are many disabled, or mentally handicapped and some do not even speak the language. Many are "invisible" for statistics because they do not have identity cards. The community themselves are almost hidden, difficult to access, while the visible ones are systematically demolished.

**These people are hardly visible spatially and politically. They lack self-representation capacity, and have no authoritative representatives with real competence.**

- **The problem is diverse (5)**

There are major differences among the communities under study and inside each community. They are fully and significantly aware of the difference from their neighbor. The poor are not the same, the Romany are not the same, so any solution should be aware of it. In each community, there are three identifiable stages of poverty that could form an analysis basis and a starting point for the intervention scenarios.

**The maladjusted interventions on the community type and especially on the appropriate differentiation among dwellings have led so far to limitation only to poverty in case of families that have an adaptation potential and to a boom in childbirth.**

## **Urban and rural features**

Two thirds of the poor Romany live in towns. They live in communities that vary as to location or dwelling culture. Housing poverty is determined by a series of factors that turn into causes that limit their social insertion. Nomadic life no longer represents a significant part of their heritage for the town Romany. However, the historical causes have laid a strong mark on their present condition. We would like to mention their slavery, holocaust, deportation, ousting, demolition, moving out of traditional settlements. The maladjusted policies of local authorities take a top position in the way they deal with the town disadvantaged. Because in Romania there is a generalized culture of poverty, people have grown less sensitive to this matter. Their lack of education, the general discrimination, slipping into racism sometimes, the general unemployment, and even the identity imperative to take up a traditional profession make them change resistant; thus, the poverty is extreme when considered from the viewpoint of society to the ones excluded and when we reverse this perspective.

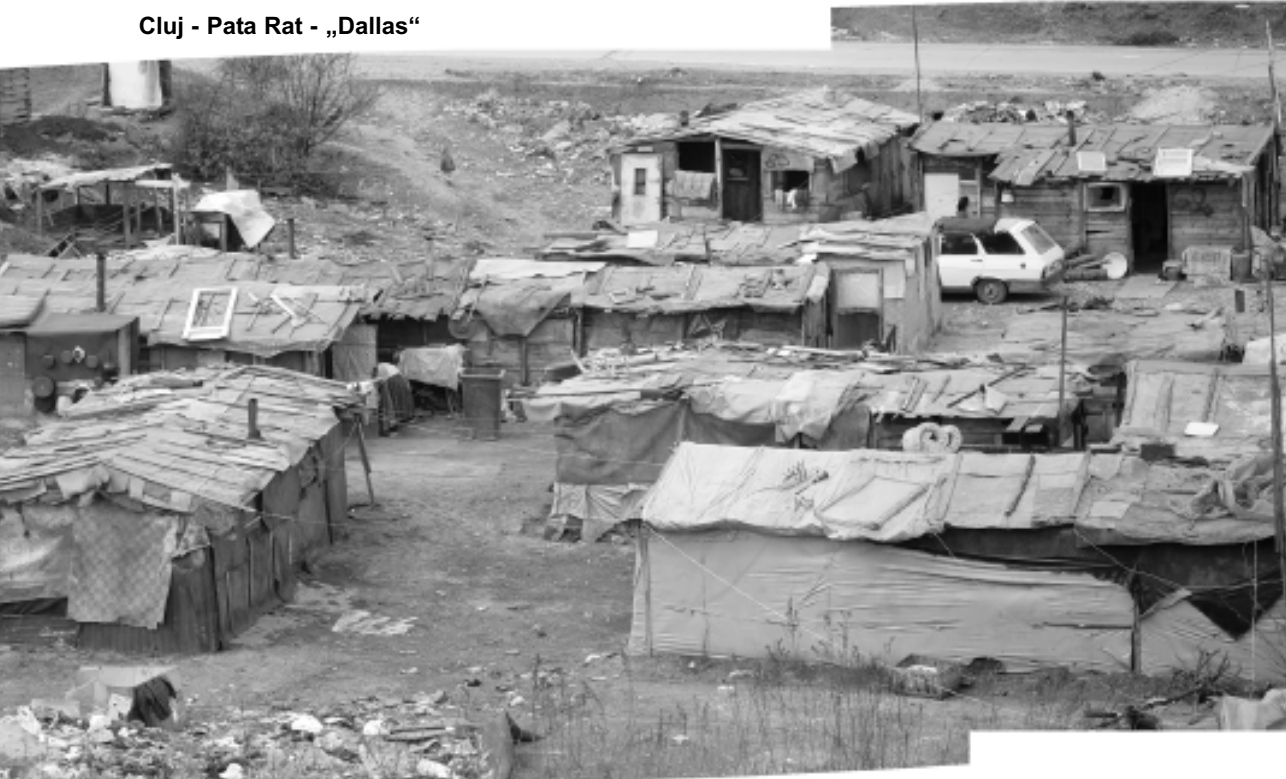
Resistance to change is not only a characteristic of those excluded but also of the society in general. The local administration that should be the key actor of change, due to its incompetence and ignorance plays a major role in the persistence of discrimination.

The town communities are rather vulnerable to housing problems, being unable to build their own houses.

Here are the major tendencies of extreme poverty and spatial problems depending on it:

- Spontaneous implantation of extremely poor urban communities and multiplication of non-rural ethnic ghettos (mostly inhabited by the Romany).
  - Increasing number of jobless people unable to keep up with house administration costs in the ghettos.
  - Speedy dilapidation of the apartment buildings in neighborhoods.
  - Ghetto location (either spontaneous or directed by local administration) in precarious site and environment conditions (terrains prone to flooding, trash ditches or those where industrial or mining wastes have been stored)
  - No clear property status generating a sort of "urban migration".
- For instance, the decision to reclaim the historic centers of towns

Cluj - Pata Rat - „Dallas“



based on the method “illegal tenants should go back where they belong”; moreover, the illegal occupation of buildings or apartments generates a sort of chain of spontaneous settlements.

- The cycle eviction-squatting encourages the use of non-constructive materials, which leads to makeshift shelters that are abandoned and put up again in a different place.

The rural Romany live in a state of profound poverty, being shun from development. However, their poverty is less profound than of those in towns, yet they have no chance of development. This is why the settlements of poor Romany in the country are real immigration reservoirs pressing on the urban ghettos. As to living quality, despite higher income of those in towns, the rural Romany enjoy better conditions in summer. However, in winter, their isolated condition means a perpetual surviving exercise. During these seasons, there were cases of children death by frost in both towns and villages. In general, the rural Romany are less vulnerable, because they are familiar with building techniques, can have access to building materials and the locations are far more stable.





Their living conditions are better than in towns, although they migrate from village to town. Such localities expand and they use better building materials and techniques. However, the housing space cannot cover the natural birth rate.

The extreme housing poverty in the Romany communities is connected to two factors:

- Precarious houses (materials, insulation, dimension, occupation density, poor heating and sanitary equipments)
- and
- Precarious community environment (evacuation of wastes, access to running water, phone, roads, social services).

**The Romany's poverty depends on the community, both from historic and contemporary perspectives.**



All the above-mentioned data require intervention actions, where the community planning should prevail. It is most likely that in Romania's case, the general estimate of extreme poverty should not cover the social growing segment of communities prone to live in ghettos, improvised shelters (such as lockers in abandoned stadium) and other forms of excluded communities.

This is the reason why such interventions should be done urgently and on a bigger scale.

**Valea lui Stan, Brezoi - Vilcea County**





### **Orăștie**

Sorinel shows us the well proudly. They have been moved here, in the lockers under the Mecanica Stadium, from a block of flats with no utilities. Even if water is pouring whenever it rains, they succeeded in keeping the place clean. Medicinal plants grow here and there on the former football pitch; people look after a garden behind the wall, and there were several attempts to breed a swine, but the town hall denied it because they would "damage the pitch". Dampness and mould, chilliness and "the dirty" ones lead to a high level of morbidity.

## Housing Typologies

The research, carried out so far by sociologists in some ample synthesis projects on the Romany conditions, focused on their economic, demographic, and social characteristics of the Romany communities in relation to the ethnic dimension. However, both directly through observation and indirectly through statistics, they also revealed some important data concerning housing. By presenting this community typology – relating the community to the major settlement – we will somehow systematize these remarks on housing, thus diversifying the traditional pairs rural-urban, periphery-center and offering a minimum number of housing typologies where the diversity of the existing settlements could be included. We have not considered the geographic or regional criteria that, in our opinion, are secondary, but insisted on genetic, relational, and topological aspects of such communities. We have selected some examples to illustrate each case through a number of case sets relevant for each community type and some other similar communities briefly.

The reason why we have created this typology reflects the need to develop different intervention principles as concerns the eradication of extreme poverty and the integration of the Romany communities according to some criteria that the decision makers could assimilate. This is why we offer *an operational tool* that would allow easy identification of community type by setting it under a conceptual umbrella made up of various criteria: topological, ethnic-cultural, historic, etc. Such typologies as criterion packages can become rapid identification and differentiation tools for the communities under study and can be related to the intervention strategies.

Our approach was selective and has in view some general aspects present in a number of settlements and communities. However, we think that a map of Romany communities should be drawn to make all kinds of housing visible and be a graphic image of the intervention principles underlying the project. Such a map could show first the statistic-quantitative aspects of the housing problems and then, it would help the intervention strategies nationwide.

### Topology elements

The communities of poor Romany are settled in disadvantaged places. They are dependant on the major settlement and their spatial relation with the environment and the center has a key role for the community development. This is why the description should be very precise to inform the decision making process. The here below descriptions are true for both rural and urban cases. To make a decision as concerns their relocation, we identified the major settlement types.

The spatial elements of relation will help, in the first stage, to briefly describe the physical position of poor communities as to the main settlement.

The spatial analysis should take into account:

- The autonomy of the settlement – the spatial solidity of the settlement
- Access – length and quality of the connection and access handiness
- Contiguity – presence and quality of elements ensuring contiguity
- Vectors – presence or absence of some urban development directions



Considering these elements, we have developed some types that could be associated to the community typology as a means of decision making in community planning.

#### Isolated

Although the major settlement is connected to the marginalized community, that is of poor quality and/or is far away. Spatial autonomy does not concur to positive identity of the settlement, able to offer it some future development. Some communities are condemned to eternal isolation because any program that might be sustained by the community will fail. Therefore, it is advisable that the development should be blocked and a relocation program should be started.

E.g.: Pata Rât, Cluj; zones 3 and 4 from village Cetățeni, Argeș County



### Satellite

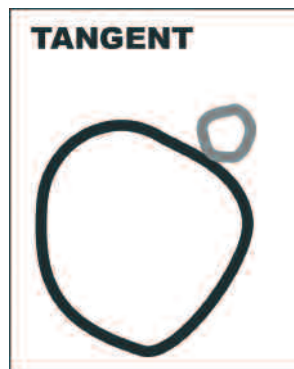
The main settlement is physically well connected to the poor community but spatial segregation betrays marginalization and exclusion showing scarce development options. Most times, such communities lack other utilities apart from electricity. They are identified and classified according to their complete dependence on the main settlement both administratively and from the economic point of view. The fact that they are not spatially integrated beckons an initial decision based on the negative features of the community. The decision of modernization can be only true if the locality grows rapidly to its satellite. E.g. the Bemilor Hill neighborhood, Orăștie; Perșani village – Brașov



### Tangent

These communities are thrust on the side of the settlement being separated by a physical obstacle, which is more or less permissive (river, railway, bridge, and barrier) and acquires a symbolic value. They have the highest potential of growing both as number of communities and inhabitants. At the same time, the configuration type is of embryo kind. Such settlements are often relocated due to city expansion. Thus, solutions to fix and modernize them should be found to assure long-term integration.

E.g.: Valea Rece – Tîrgu Mureș; zone 1, village Cetățeni; Bălteni – Dîmbovița;



### Peripheral

It is the historic evolution of the tangent type and can be easily modernized. A special attention should be paid to achieve contiguity. The longer and more permissive the vicinity area is, the more development chances it has. Such communities have a powerful historic awareness and possibilities to become politically aware. They can carry on self-building and self-management programs. They have been constantly relocated



through time, which led to complete impoverishment of the population that had to suffer such operations. It is recommended that they should be modernized and the inclusion elements enhanced.

E.g.: Dealului Street – Tg. Mureș; Digului – Orăștie; Șercaia – Sibiu

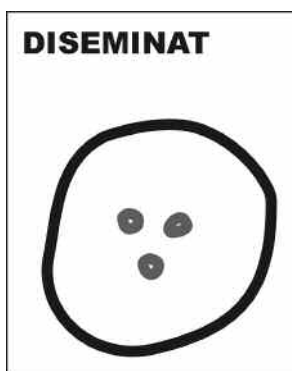


### **Non-integrated yet included**

Some spatial configurations presuppose discontinuity within the settlement (river meander, isle, industrial site) pointing to a residual space inappropriate for building (flooding area or for disposing the wastes) and which is illegally inhabited. They are small communities with a high level of migration, being in fact transit zones.

Periodically, they undergo drastic administrative measures: demolition and forced eviction, yet with no consequence whatsoever because they will move to another location. Therefore, we recommend that the cases should be solved individually until the disappearance of the community, and not by entire relocation of the community.

E.g.: Peisajului - București; Borșa; Negrești-Oaș;



### **Disseminated**

They are specific to “central” communities that take built areas, mostly in the historic zones, yet never build or modernize the space they inhabit. In case of dissemination, the Romany inhabitants are mingled with the majority and have different living histories and standards. They are located mostly in areas with economic, building (derelict, abandoned, unhealthy buildings) and property problems. You can find them in almost every historic center.

E.g.: Lipscani – București; Dorohoi; Satu Mare; Rodbav – jud. Sibiu;



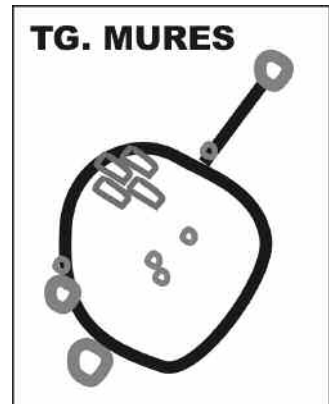
### **Enclave**

They can be easily recognized because they change the house and the environment.

Although integrated in the town, they lead to the ghetto type; they are de-structured and in constant crisis due to some initial administrative event. As a rule, the economic value of the buildings and/or the land goes beyond the tenants' potential, and so the community should be relocated.

E.g.: Rovinari neighborhood –Tîrgu Mureş;  
Energeticienilor, Zăbrăuți, Rahova Square,  
Bucharest;

An example of topological chart: Tîrgu Mureş  
The studied localities can be modernized.







## **Types of communities**

The towns concentrate 70% of the Romany population. They live in a variety of community forms of which we extracted three major types, i.e., those that can be identified as space and from the behavioral point of view. For the rural space, we have appealed again to three types that combine topological criteria with description of their birth and field research results. Though apparently heteroclitic, it allows the classification according to criteria that can be easily identified and can be associated to coherent intervention types and statements.

### **U R B A N**

#### **1. Communities in “the center”**

They can be identified in most historic centers and urban fabrics of some age, and are composed of individuals with urban background, at the second generation at least and have a transmutation history. Historically speaking, their settlement in the town came after they were freed from slavery. The demolitions before the construction of Ceausescu's civic centers also created conditions for such communities due to the abandoned houses. Most of the time they are inhabited semi-illegally or illegally being characterized and governed by this initial formula. The deferment of the legal solution to housing leads to serious decay of the buildings. As a rule, they become a problem of the administration and the majority that manifest racially. Some of these spaces are not inhabited or inhabitable. As an issue of public concern, they are more notorious than any kind of Romany community, being felt as a foreign body. Such cases feed the commonest attitude of the administration that advises them “to return there where they came from!” Obviously, they came from a similar place and the evictions can only perpetuate the problem.

The degree of community cohesion is not that high although the majority perceives it as being gregarious, unitary, and homogeneous. The dwellers of such communities never build; they make only some minor repairs to the houses they inhabit. In this case, dwelling is characterized by the change of an entire associated territory and the emergence of some physical borders. In most situations, the authorities build walls (Geoagiu, Piatra Neamț, Dorohoi) to limit their direct access to central streets.

**The communities in “the center” are generally disseminated; there are rare cases of enclaves and they are inhabited by people with long histories of urban dwelling, diversity, and individualism.**



E.g. Lipscani – București; Dorohoi – Botoșani County; Tg. Mureș – Mureș County; Satu Mare – Satu Mare County.

### **Dorohoi, the historic center**

Although they represent a powerful historic heritage with identity value for the town, the former Jewish shops were due for demolition since 2002. The leasing contracts were no longer signed to the former tenants (360 people – a figure provided by the Romany representatives). These houses are a public danger. E.g.: a piece of the right wall is no longer backed and in the upper side, there is a major crack. However, the traffic of the whole community takes place here and the children play in the same dangerous place. The general lethargy has already led to an accident: a fellow's head was split by a piece of ceiling plaster.



## 2. Communities in the “block of flats”

They resulted from individual relocations, evictions, and repartitions of some social cases. Moreover, they underwent a process of filtration on the part of the administration that created enclaves of individuals that couldn't be integrated. One should be very careful with the long-term implications of such policies. Although the sources of community formation are quite diverse, that leads to social homogeneity. The absence of a reinsertion program results in rapid dereliction of the buildings. They are in fact camps for the uneducable. Ethnically heterogeneous, they are not real communities; the only thing that binds them together is a recent event and one of administrative nature. The chance of development is almost negative, thus, rapid and radical interventions are needed to solve such cases. The way in which the houses decay is predictable and true for all the cases in the country. Because the tenants have no income, they cannot pay the utilities costs. The utilities are no longer provided and the equipment is dismantled and sold. They are replaced with makeshift devices. In most cases, the ground floor is uninhabitable and turns into a garbage space. Such communities are in every Romanian town.

**The communities in “the block of flats” result from wrong administrative policies that place people with social problems in houses that are above their economic standard.**

E.g.: Energeticienilor, Bucharest; Bîrlad; Hunedoara; Tîrgu Ocna; Orăştie; Rovinari - Tîrgu Mureş; Satu Mare; Buhuşi; Cluj

### Orăştie, Pricazului Street

The living spaces are governed by women. The man is always absent: either to work or “lives with someone else”, or in prison. The objects, their organization, and decoration show women's tastes and preferences. In the above picture, we can see one of the rare manifestations of a young man – pictures with almost naked women in the background.





### 3. Peri-urban communities

Although their rural structure is prevailing, they are completely dependent on the town. Sometimes they are tangent, in other cases satellite. The limit is always clear and plays a powerful role, symbolical too, to filter the access (river, important street, barrier, etc.) Such communities resulted from successive relocations over a long period, yet they preserve their unity. They are historically aware and identity biased in relation to the neighboring majority. The Romany language is used as second language, while the traditional occupations are minimal; they dress in town clothes and in relative stable relations with the administration. Although they can integrate, the historic bias and the local administration shortsightedness make it impossible, which leads to visible rhythms of assimilation of modern life. The development of such settlements is encouraged by authorities as a solution to relocate the Romany of the “center” or of those “of the block of flats”. In such settlements, they build houses that appeal to a variety of techniques and materials; yet the spatial variety is quite reduced.

The spatial organization unfolds along a major spine, rambling chaotically. Although the territory is not obviously marked, there is a solid tacit convention on each parcel limit that can be identified by a milestone; the parcels have almost similar sizes, the accesses have a windy nature, yet are still connected to the central spine. Densification is acquired when the newcomer settles by consensus. In most case, there are no legal documents on the land, but the authorities accept it by tradition and due to their relative long period of habitation. However, the absence of legal acts and administrative stability could lead to relocation.

#### **Cluj, Pata Rât, The trash pit**

Some people were born in the trash pit and have been living there for 40 years.



E.g.: Valea Rece – Tîrgu Mureş; Dealului – Tîrgu Mureş; Cantonului Street – Cluj; Pata-Rât – Cluj; Bucharest.

**The peri-urban communities are inhabited by people whose life is exclusively connected to the town. It is a shelter type of living, illegal, and spiced with normal houses or on the way to normalization.**

## RURAL

### 4. Para-rural Communities

The prefix *para-* expresses subsidization of a different manner of living, while *peri-* the physical contiguity of two distinct objects. The para-rural communities are disseminated within the majority central territory. It resulted either by purchase or, in rarer cases, by illegal occupation of some houses in places with declining population where massive immigration took place. It resembles the “central” urban type as living model in villages without a significant central area.

They are not real communities, in terms of structure, which is justified by the long succession of land occupation, their reduced sizes, and sprawling over a large territory. You can find them in Transylvania, not only in the deserted villages of the Saxons. The major note is the radical change of the space by living it; in the case of building interventions, there is a radical change of the initial building.

**The para-rural communities are made of integrated families or on the way of integration.**

(E.g.: Rodbav - Braşov, Viscri - Braşov, Călnic- Alba, Dealu Frumos - Sibiu)

#### **Rodbav, Sibiu County**

The Saxons left the place long ago. The village-hall was given the houses and allotted them to social cases. There are no histories of forced occupation, which points to a different stereotype.





### **5. Peri-rural communities**

They can be found in the extension or apparent extension of a village, because they do not benefit from the same status, access to utilities; they don't have the same type of spatial or household organization. The territory limits are not defined as in the peri-urban communities, yet the change of lifestyle is obvious.

In rich communities, the differences are obvious in the decoration quality and mostly in the roof configuration. Such communities have a decisive ethnic character, where the Romany language plays an important role; they preserved their costume and practice traditional professions. They have a stable structure and hierarchy, a leader, and some poor people who live in the outskirts.



In the case of poor communities, the living manner is subordinated to the specific model of the area, even in matters of decoration. The extremely poor ones live in huts and even in reused shelters (site barracks, camping little houses, containers, trailers, etc)

**The peri-rural communities are enclaves that have been created by a founding event whose trace can be found in time determining the current segregation situation defined by an accentuated spatial discrimination.**

Examples: Valea lui Stan –Vâlcea County; Buzescu –Teleorman County; Grajduri –Iași County; Sintești –Ilfov County; Zanea-Ciurea –Iași County; Bălteni village, Conțești –Dâmbovița County; Perșani –Brașov County; Buzescu – Teleorman County.



**Bălteni, Dîmbovița County.**

The lane in the village outskirts, initially inhabited by Romanians, was taken by successive purchase and the houses, though quite modest, reflect the style of the palaces from Buzescu, Ciurea, Grajduri, Liești etc.

Valea lui Stan, Vîlcea County – a gipsy woodworkers' settlement in the outskirts of a Romanian village.

**6. “Autonomous” communities**

Though administratively belong to a village, in fact they are physically and as community separated from it. In this case, “autonomy” refers to territory, topology, and politics. The difference from the *peri-rural* ones resides in the absence of contiguity between the majority settlement and the territory inhabited by the Romany. The territorial relations are not strong enough,



while the administrative and economic ones are weaker than those with the rest of the locality are. The distance between them is more important than their closeness or the administrative umbrella. They show a wide variety, yet the prevailing feature is extreme poverty. The majority live in mono-cellular huts. They have almost no utilities or illegal connection to electricity. The new buildings are erected in case of emergency and with minimal techniques, being rebuilt quite often.

The isolated settlements have preserved a patriarchal, peasant-like lifestyle. The constructive techniques as well as the survival strategies are more developed than those found in other types, yet they are unable to generate quality vernacular living style.

**The “autonomous” communities are abandoned by administration; they have a long segregation history and a longer one of cohabitation. They resulted from a century long process of acculturation and this is why they are not fundamentally different from those of the majority.**

Example: Bolovanu – Vîlcea; Cetățeni – zone 3 and 4, Argeș County

**Bolovanu, Vîlcea County** – a „rudari” (woodworkers) settlement between two Romanian villages. Although it was settled some 40 years ago it does not appear on the maps.



### **Final remarks**

The Romany communities under study revealed a surprising interior diversity. Different levels of living quality are present in every community, no matter its size. The types of settlement can show also some slight tendencies of typological mixture (particularly in the rural area).

Our approach was selective and pointed to conspicuous general aspects found in a number of Romany communities. We think it is high time we drew up the **map of Romany communities** able to cover all the identified types. It would be a graphic image of the typologies that structured our research. Such a map could shed some nuances on the statistics regarding the living problems.

## **COMMUNITY REPORTS**

**Dorohoi**

**Energeticienilor**

**Orastie**

**Cluj Pata Rat**

**Dallas**

**Cantonului**

**Peisajului**

**Valea Rece**

**Geoagiu**

**Balteni**

**Cetateni**

## **Dorohoi**

### **Historic Center**

Location: in the very center of Dorohoi, close to the town-hall and on the thoroughfare, across the only fourteen-storey block in town, in the former Jewish houses, some leftovers of an ancient neighborhood assaulted by Ceausescu's civic center and recent buildings that tend to follow the same spirit. The urban configuration is similar to Bucharest's Lipscani neighborhood: row of houses on narrow plots, with rare accesses from the street (mostly 50 cm width), with still functional shops on the ground floor and one-storey houses behind. Most of them are not inhabited and the roofs are about to fall off, being a real threat for the tenants and passers-by.

Type: "Center" community. Most have urban background, even if they have come to town recently. They depend on the town; there are few horses (2-3) and no animals.

Size: The census reports 480 Romanies. For the area under study, where inhabitation is forbidden and proposed to be demolished, the Romany representatives counted 360 people. It is interesting to note that the town hall, though they have inspectors and VMG, had only 180 people on the list and a different distribution according to families. Having checked one list against the other, we noticed that the Town Hall counts people they find in a house in a critical condition, while the Romany representatives' list show the level of their aspiration by placing all in a disadvantaged condition with complex family structure and marked individuality.

Historic background. There are two stages in the community life, separated by the 1989 revolution. Before the revolution, there were few tenants. The

The former jewish shops still preserve beautiful details, the few remains of the old town.





The yard behind the facades from the first picture.

houses were not in a good condition, yet they could be lived in. After the revolution, the mayor who ran the town until 2004, brought in Romanians from all Moldova to raise the number of voters (information from interviews with various clerks from the Town Hall or closed relations). When the former tenants left, the newer once occupied them illegally, and they had conflicts with the authorities and the majority. The building site in the proximity and their deep dereliction catalyzed discrimination. There was an attempt to build a wall that would have blocked the main access to the center, forcing them to make a detour around the urban isle. Following the protests of the Romany associations, the wall was demolished. The mayor evicted those whose address was in a different town.

The housing status: Following the engineers' expertise and interdiction to use the houses, the leasing contracts were no longer renewed. However, there are still illegal tenants, vulnerable to police's actions. Some have an electricity contract, which shows that the situation is not that clear.

The living standard: Though even the better looking house/apartment can be easily rated as poor, there are notable difference among them, from houses with a TV set, a gas oven and a mobile phone, to floorless "grottoes" without doors and plastic sheets instead of window panes, inhabited by 10-12 people. In the latter cases, the situation is sub-human: appallingly dirty children, almost naked in mid winter, tuberculosis, alcoholism, and total obnubilation of their parents. We estimate a quarter of extreme poverty cases and a tenth of decaying conditions. For the latter, the only solution is institutionalization.



The housing condition. The houses have no running water, not even in public wells. The only well was dismantled in the autumn of 2004. They use logs and nutshells to heat the place. The traditional stove is invariably made of iron, with oven standing on legs. There is a big pot in which they boil tea, their major "food" and some other pots with water, which the women and girls (8-9 years old) do the laundry without soap in most cases. There is no problem of overcrowding. They use to inhabit only one room out of the three or four. Obviously, they depend on just one source of heating.

There are two distinct areas: that with shared yard and that with individual yards. The latter is occupied by those who think of themselves as being "clean", some of them had left "the dirty". Their houses are well looked after: repaired floors and painted walls. However, nobody seems to care about the roofs that are about to collapse. These households have more objects and the access is via a small yard. The second area is inhabited on the ground and upper floors. Four Romanian families also live here. In the yard, there are two privies and some improvised stables. The areas are somewhat separated by house that can no longer be inhabited.

"The hero father" - seven children, wife in prison for pick pocketing. Almost all children from this community go to school.



### **Bucharest, District 3**

#### **Titan neighborhood, Energeticienilor Boulevard**

**(Excerpt from Manoleli/Celac/Kiraly research report 2003)**

**photo credits: Iosif Kiraly**

**Housing type:** Urban. Group of non-family dormitory, ground floor + 4 upper floors, large prefabricated panels. Functional when it was allocated (central heating, electricity, water, carpentry, entrance doors). At the time of the study all the utilities were cut off, the ground floor vandalized and used as trash space and toilet for children.

**Size:** about 150 households with 1400 people (study estimate starting from the town hall data); 9.3 people per household living in 1-2 rooms.

**Manner of occupation and its origin:** Given to the “Cismigiu strikers” (winter 2000) by Bucharest’s Town Hall. Various ethnicity, age, social origin, lifestyle, profession, income level reunited by eviction, joined by their protest and administrative decision that brought them there. After a brief inquiry in winter 2003, we found:

Households (generations) average in an apartment – 2.6

Average number of rooms per apartment: 1.46

Room medium area – 13.9 sq m

**The legal status of the house:** 36% - property; 20% - state rent; 44% without legal documents.

**The living standard** of the households in the enclave.

1. Households/families with great economic problems that live in precarious and/or decayed conditions in places that are not appropriate for the family size, without essential equipment: approx. 67%
2. Households/families with great economic problems that live in quite appropriate conditions. Households with better economic status but live in precarious, deteriorated conditions – approx. 17%.
3. Households with better economic status and acceptable or good living conditions – approx. 16 %

The data of the 2002 census show a quantitative improvement of the housing condition mainly due to demographic processes (population decrease) and secondly to building and rehabilitation of new constructions. The increase of room areas surpasses the amount of built rooms, pointing to an improvement of living standard. Meanwhile the decline of the existing hous-



ing fund increased. As concerns the general level of living, the quantitative changes were not reflected in the living quality. The most drastic phenomena, however, are connected to the appearance of the disadvantaged, of poverty layers (with one end of extreme poverty), of marked presence of marginality and social exclusion. The Romanies and the old people are the most affected categories.

| DISTRICT 3 | Stable population | Households | Houses  | No. rooms | SQ M      |
|------------|-------------------|------------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| 2002       | 391 192           | 153 244    | 164.428 | 373.374   | 5.885.422 |
| 1992       | 407 793           | 148 601    | 153.010 | 348.108   | 5.062.266 |
| 2002-1992% | 95,9%             | 103,1%     | 107,5%  | 107,3%    | 116,25%   |

| DISTRICT 3 | No. people/<br>households | No. houses/<br>households | No. rooms/<br>house | SQ/room | SQ/ person |
|------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|---------|------------|
| 2002       | 2,55                      | 1,06                      | 2,42                | 15,76   | 16,67      |
| 1992       | 2,74                      | 1,02                      | 2,42                | 14,54   | 14,70      |

Statistically speaking, among the Romanies we can find often:

- 1-2 small roomed houses, overcrowded;
- cohabitation of many generations in the same room, absence of equipment;
- frequent cases of living in derelict apartments with no sanitary facility;
- a small percentage own it – which would encourage a responsible and positive attitude towards the living space. The number of owners is three times smaller than those in the district are.

Every disadvantaged category described above show a series of particular aspects and need a set of specific measures to arrive at an appropriate habitat. The solution program for the disadvantaged include, besides the building of new apartments and shelters, economic measures, employment programs, legal assistance, educational and information measures and programs, social care, community life and cultural environment. In the spirit of the national plan anti-poverty, of the program exclusively focused on the Romanies and the international documents on the right to appropriate housing to which Romania belongs, the local strategy should draw up packages of flexible, integrated measures that address every aspect of living.

This typology is based on the inventory drawn up by the police stations and appealed to an intuitive scale based on non-standard categories (“precarious”, “degraded”, “mediocre”, “very good”, etc) without pursuing a unitary

methodology. The research team (Celac, Lapadat, Kiraly) completed the existing picture with empirical observations and tests. To fully and coherently understand the typology and living conditions with a view to draft the action plans, it is necessary:

- to process and map the primary data of the house census for district 3;
- to find classification criteria and define the indices for housing categories;
- to carry out a sociological inquiry on a representative target group for district 3, whose results should be checked against the census data;
- to work with the organizations of the Romanies and the tenants as concerns the traditional features of living.

### **The existing situation. A general view**

The presentation summarizes the major results from a research on the existing condition of living and housing environment for the disadvantaged population, including the Romanies, in Bucharest's district 3. The research has provided some necessary facts that will lead to some conclusions. They point to the characteristic problems of housing due for rehabilitation and improvement in district 3; they are meant to expand the range of solutions for building scenarios and variants that will be submitted so as decisions could be made.

In the poverty enclaves, living in extremely precarious conditions – with numerous insalubrious and decayed cases – coexist with unemployment, random income, high morbidity, alcoholism and drugs, endemic vio-



lence, lack of identity cards, vandalistic acts against the buildings and environment.

Especially in the enclaves with studio apartments, the failure of the relocation actions is obvious. After four years from the moment a group of homeless was given an apartment, the four-

storey blocks of flats show the following aspects:

- excessive density, with many-membered families of many generations and many small children;
- rooms heated by improvised, life-threatening stoves;
- no running water in collective dwelling; cut off from installations, decaying spaces; biological wastes are randomly evacuated, including in shared spaces;



- the ground floor carpentry was used as fuel;
- the shared spaces and the surrounding terrain are sprinkled with garbage.

Obviously, the solution to the exclusion situations is a failure, quite a costly one. After three years, these families could not surpass their state of extreme poverty; the block of flats is derelict and the local authority has to face a group of people that will be evicted and relocated. (When this volume was published, it has already happened. The people were evicted, yet they were given no alternative).

The failure has many causes. The first is the absence of a community program in parallel to house allocation that could provide for assistance, education, financial support, and alternative solutions to post-occu-

pation use. All case studies on houses for the marginalized and the alleviation of social exclusion in Europe and the United States, the UNO documents, those of European Community and the recent programs drawn up by the Romanian Government contain as part of building, rehabilitation actions, a component of community action carried out inside the community. Without such permanent social programs, those meant for housing, environment improvement will lead to waste of valuable resources, exclusion, and deterioration of the town's disadvantaged.

Our analysis has found that:



**The problematic of very low standard or severe deterioration of housing in the urban area, especially in the center, is not only specific to the Romanies.** The examination of spatial distribution of sub-standard housing of those belonging to extreme poverty and severe poverty categories, either from majority or other ethnic groups living in sub-perimeters and enclaves, suggest that the solutions can be only integrated and applied on limited territories following a case study, not on ethnic criteria. Relocation based on ethnic criteria lead to ghetto formation and open way to ethnic exclusion and discrimination.

**Severe and extremely severe situations in the case of housing overlap severe and extreme poverty situations,** which leads to flexible, simultaneous, diversified approaches of living in the context of economic, social, and cultural states of the families.

**The area of solutions** to housing does not only reside in allocation of land and building of houses, and less in the creation of ethnically oriented enclaves of improved living. One should examine alternative scenarios in relation with the directions suggested by the PNASinc plan, such as:



1. The diversification of solutions, including rehabilitation and improvement of living conditions – of different nature: economic, social, financial, educational, and cultural – meant to complete the proper physical rehabilitation and building measures;
2. The approach of problems concerning the property of houses and terrains and legal dwelling;
3. Personalized and flexible packages and scenarios;
4. The denial of those solutions based on forced transmutation or creation of exclusive enclaves with many tenants;
5. The appeal to a large range of actions to fight poverty and its effects on living – temporary shelters, very cheap houses, temporary housing.
6. Absolute priority to extreme situations present in district 3 (the case of Energeticienilor zone); it represents an adverse case of industrialization that started in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that was continued by the irrelevant socialist program of modernization and negative effects of transition on the disadvantaged.
7. The stimulation of employment by involving those who are to be given an apartment in the building and rehabilitation program.
8. Minimal access to electricity and running water.

9. Focus on severe housing situations in district 3, for instance, in the historic center (with a special status concerning the architectural and urban protected area), in the adjacent area of Unirii Boulevard or in particular cases of decayed rural environment, in Gara Catelu Boulevard.

10. Parallel development of housing and social programs, of those concerning sanitary information, culture, and education. Only a good partnership between local authority and the civil society associations (ethnic, tenant, charity, religious) could address the problem of poverty and social exclusion in district 3.







### **Orăștie - Mecanica Stadium**

When we came in, she appeared to be the most quarrelsome of all. A bulky woman, with tattoos probably acquired in prison, wearing a white impeccably clean shirt. For her, we were people from Bucharest, carrying cameras just as many others who happened to visit the place. She cursed and shouted almost all the time we spoke to other people. And after an hour or so, when living the place, we approached her. She shown us to her house, a tiny cell in the stadium's vestiaries divided by a wall she build herself to have a kitchen.

Everything was tidy and well kept - carpets, embroidered napkins. We took some photos and then we noticed that a man was there, almost invisible, sleeping hidden under blanket. "He's cancerous, under morphine" she whispered calmly, tears in her eyes. An hour of rage that dissolved in a few seconds of communication.

## Orastie

Renaître Romania Foundation, a local NGO, helped us to carry on this research. They provide sanitary and juridical assistance, education, sometimes help and shelter to people in need. The complex character of the services offered and their field experience in Romania make Renaître a valuable partner of the local authorities. Renaître gives help to 100 families, i.e. 457 persons, among them 267 children. Many come from single-parent families.

The Foundation developed a truly interesting programme of self-help, comprising the management of a farm in which the beneficiaries worked to produce the food staff they needed. This arrangement - a variety of Fourierism, but pragmatic and devoid of utopian drive - produced a sort of behavioural adjustment that proves that a populace of urban Roma, former industrial workers, can provide the daily subsistence food ration through tending a small plot with vegetables.

The Renaître experiment do not contradict our overall assessment about the "central communities" as being exclusively urban ergo anti-agricultural. That enriches our analysis with an exception governed by the specific logics of less industrialized, small townships, immersed in agricultural surroundings, where a strong organization backed up by a flexible administration could possibly provide intelligent responses to urgent needs.

Orăştia is challenged by a huge relocation problem of those who had lived in block of flats. Some of the blocks were destroyed by the former tenants and were almost abandoned by those who used to administer them. Many tenants were set to the lockers of "Mecanica" stadium, which is disused. About 25 families live here below the stands through which rain leaks. Although the hydro-insulation system has been repaired, water still leaks through joints. Instead of repairing the ceilings, the tenants seek to divert the rainwater, which flows inside. This strategy and





their measures to close spaces (blankets over the windows, closed metal doors) have lead to mold and damp. There is a small separating wall hiding a toilet they connected to the existing main. There is no door, just a curtain. Thus, their living experience in a block of flats persuaded them into doing so.

The Pricazu area, where most of the derelict blocks stand is a source of severe poverty. When the family living conditions deteriorates irremediably and the household falls into extreme poverty, they are forced to move to other places. This move is a irreversible blow to the families that in most cases fall apart.

As everywhere, their major occupation is washing. Clean clothes are a passport to obtaining a job, be it temporary, and the only way to preserve the contact with the rest of the society. In fact, they are not different, in matter of clothing, from the rest of the population. The former exit place of the football players offers an excellent space for drying their laundry. The only water source, for which they pay globally, is a well installed by the town hall on the margin of the football pitch.

An atypical activity for an urban community composed of former industrial workers is vegetable growing, practised on tiny parcels allocated

by the town hall. This activity resulted from the Romanian-French cooperation, "Renaître Romania" that had a farm on which they taught the program beneficiaries to work in this area. The farm has been dismantled, yet the skills acquired helped them. This can be a solution for small towns where the agricultural land is accessible. We noted the pieces of furniture and

some tools, very rare in households affected by extreme poverty. Although the inventory is scanty, the living units are markedly individualized and secured by several locks.

## **Cluj, „Dallas“ & Str. Cantonului (Pata Rât)**

Pata Rat settlement is located at five kilometres far from Cluj. Here one finds two communities - one developed in a spontaneous way, in fact a periurban satellite settlement, the other - a colony created on a narrow plot of land between a railroad and a ordinary road, created following the evictions from town. The first one, called by its inhabitants "Dallas", might be the most notorious or Roma settlements. It displays a metabolism comparable with that of the conquest of the West by American pioneers - people works, occupy available land, speculate, and exploit every opportunity. The other one, named Cantonului street, is an unhappy initiative of city's administration and an example for the shortcomings of the urban policies enforced by police methods.



Dallas settlement shelters about 600 dwellers, living in close proximity on approx. two hectares in shelters of all kind - barracks, a few wooden houses and a single brick house. Two kilometres away from this point, the waste pit of the City is located. Some inhabitants were born there, live and



work daily in the waste pit. Some sheds could be found within the waste pit and on the pit's fringes. Children are put at work to collect sellable waste - a busy activity, economically profitable.

Economic vigour is decisive for "Dallas" as compared to other communities we visited; the people work, they do not hang around, and tend to complain less than those do at Pata Rât 2, who live in tin houses with electricity. It is the only community where we found many animals and cars. There are also a dispensary and a prayer house. From our discussions, we understood that, for some of them, collecting materials was a season activity.





Besides houses made of tin panels, there are approximately 40 improvised clustered shelters. The fires take place quite often, destroying two-three houses at once. As the settlement is 5 km away from Cluj, the fire-fighter, whose intervention would be useless, cannot get there in time.

The heap of materials covered with a tarpaulin is a former/future house. His house was demolished two days ago and told to come here, near the railway. The Cluj police are, thus, the major actors in the urban policy regarding extreme poverty.







They were evicted two years ago from an apartment. They still have a fitted carped stretching on earth now, the cabinet and the gadgets. All objects defining normal living are present. Around this apparently normal room, they patched a skeleton of rare boards leaning on some poles. The façade is made of some cardboards and plastic sheets. The roof, of plastic sheets over which they placed some rocks, will stay until the next eviction, when they will waste half of their belongings, as it happened when they came to the railway.

There are people who never lived in a wall house; they were born on town fringes, in a hut that was demolished and moved by the police once in two years.





"See, she's a Romanian! See the Romanian," she said while kissing the little one. The first signs of discrimination appear in the first day of school and dramatically influence the Romany children. The presence of the four Romanian families, as poor as they are, does no comfort the kid who finds out she is different from the rest. In fact, she wants to tell us that "Well, I'm a gypsy, happy to have been accepted".



"When do you think the house is ready?"

"I don't know. A months or two ... I've just started it."

"How long?"

"For a month or so, eh ..."

"Where did you live before?"

"With some relatives ... but only for few months".

"And before?"

"We managed as we could ... With relatives and then ..."

"So, you move a lot ..."

"Yes ... Every six months ... It was kind of hard ... We help each other as we can, 'cause we are humans, aren't we?"

## Peisajului Street - Bucharest

On the bank of Lake Fundeni, in a flooding area, a small Romany settlement has developed. It has a long history back to their slavery on Ghica estate; yet, the inhabitants place it in the interwar period. The historic metabolism is similar to that in other peri-urban settlement – their parents lived there, the children moved to live in a block of flats but now they have returned. Besides the approximately 40 average houses, with normal living standard, specific to Bucharest's periphery, there are approximately 20 huts. A specific urban development strategy would be to group them (3 to 8 shelters) and form what we call a *cluster*.

The houses are built with a rather advanced technology, that is, a timber sandwich structure filled with earth. Partial plasters, some of earth, reinforced with iron net are present. Between the first and the second visit, eight more huts appeared; they were peopled with tenants from nationalized houses that had be retroceded to their owners.

The Romanies in the area call themselves “ursari” (bearers – entertainers with a dancing bear), although they work in smith's trade. They make clamps in small oven fueled with coal, and work in their trade in the neighboring sites. Although their income is adequate, it is not reflected in the living quality.



A cluster made up of four shelters houses a family from Constanta, parents and five children. The last three kids were born in Bucharest. No one in the family has identity cards.

The seven people sleep in two beds and on the floor. In front of the 2x2.5 m room there is a kitchen-hall of 1.5x2.5 m where the family stores the clothes on several poles. Although young and strong, (he works on a building site) the house is awful. The interview revealed that they've never lived more than six months in a place.





The cluster in the picture below contains 5 dwellings; it is owned by a landlady who rents rooms. In the backyard, there is a smith's workshop. A new room has been added recently for her daughter. They moved in after they had been evicted from a house in Gara de Nord area. The woman was born here, lived with her daughter in the same area, but was evicted a few years ago. The children "were taken away, until they'll find something".



The third cluster houses in the first cell, a 2x3.6 m room, a family with two children. It is clean; there is a TV set, a gas stove, radio, water in a clean container. They have even a fridge, which they placed outside since there is no room for it. The house they patched burned down and it is demolished. Fortunately, the adobe wall withstood the fire. The boulder on which the bed leg sits shows the water level when it pours. The man is young and strong and he works on a building site. He earns much more than the average income. It is a case where the methodology that measures poverty by counting domestic equipment and monetary income shows its limits. How many poor are actually in Romania?



"They should work. All day long, they keep on drinking. They have money, just listen to them, but they spend it and then they are on others' mercy until they get some more. They are liars, sir! If you give them clothes and cans, they will sell them. They are not worth a penny. They should work first, and then ask. Believe me, I'm a gypsy as well, yet I worked and built a house by myself, not like them ...





## Valea Rece, Tîrgu Mures

**Location:** In the periphery of Tg. Mures, beyond the surrounding road, in a valley in the extension of a neighborhood with blocks of flats.

**Type :** "peri-urban" community. Although they live off the road and are packed together in a valley, the connection to town is obvious. Likewise, the rural structure of the settlement and the absence of water and sewerage system. However, they have gas, due to an intervention of a Romany deputy in the communist period, who "influenced the leaders in Bucharest". Only a few are connected to gas, and some were taken the meters because they did not pay the bills. They speak Hungarian, though their Romanian is rather accurate. However, the children prefer Hungarian, which shows it is their maternal language. Only the old people speak Romany: "the kids can understand, but they don't use it".

**Size:** 1460 inhabitants were reported, mostly Romanies. There are almost 300 houses of different sizes and status.

Benefiting from a marvelous view to the town, the Valea Rece neighborhood developed rapidly in the last 15 years of transition; it shelters 1460 souls that keep moving back and forth, heading to the unique water source, the well in the valley. Every woman, child, and old man has a bucket or a container, crisscross in the lane of this purely peri-urban settlement. Although there is gas and even a piece of asphalted street, although the town hall built some houses and there is a public phone, their future is still obscured by the shanty houses behind the main street.

**Background:** "The gypsy settlement was down there 50 years ago, where the blocks stand today. After they were moved away, they also had a church in the 1970s. Well, the Catholic priest was after women, so they had to move.

Afterwards the church was sold (sic!). (Interview with Lenghel, the community leader).

The rate of serious diseases and handicapped people is pretty high and visible. Unfortunately, there is no particular study to shed some light on the case and bring is statistic data. The woman in the picture has lung cancer, and protects herself with cardboard panels nailed on the hut walls. This is not the first case we encounter; many times, we see people who lost their work capacity and were denied a job. "Aren't you Romany?" her son-in-law was asked politely when he wanted a job as unskilled worker. The old people's house exterior does not only point to their powerlessness but also to their inability to build. Most of them lived in a block of flats. Their return to "țigănie" (gipsy settlement) proved they had forgotten their parents' skills to build earth hut made to last longer than a season.





Housing status: The tenants do not have property documents; it is a council estate. However, they keep on selling and buying land, inherit strips of land they divide, and have electricity contracts.

Housing standard: quite variable, from one storey house with two rooms on each floor, and built of brick, to the traditional one-room hut, made of logs plastered with clay. The main road piercing the valley is asphalted partially. Beside it, there is only one road that surrounds the settlement. You can access the houses from the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th rows by crossing the court-yards. There are cases of pathological misery: we have seen a severely handicapped child, sitting naked in the mud in mid winter. It seemed there was no one to look after him. Extreme poverty rises to 60%. Their condition is explained through alcoholism, although in the so-called pub, there are only children who buy sticks.

Living condition: The houses do not have running water; there is only one well at the bottom of the valley. From there you can see a line of people carrying buckets, cans, barrels on wheels. The well is so important that the "well boss" has become the community leader and works for the town hall.

Heating is on gas for the front houses, and on wood for the rest. There are a school and a neo-Protestant church at the bottom of the valley. However, most people are Catholic, but there are also Orthodox. The houses to the front are made of brick; in one of them, under construction, they use thermal insulating system (polystyrene thermal insulation bolted in and covered with plaster over a fiberglass net), which is rare. We could not find the owner to find out whether it was just "for fashion" or he really understood the implication of his constructive act. We were told that he had worked in Germany.



The front houses appeal to the whole range of fittings used in today's villas.

Programs: The community benefits of programs through which the village hall tries to solve sanitary problems. In 2005, they built four houses. However, the major problem is the water supply.



Lenghel, the community leader, has not a typical house, yet the living model with separation on generations and sexes is ideal for many-member Romany families. The house of the married daughter, the new family nucleus, is separated from the principal nucleus and illustrates the development strategies and ideals of traditional household structure. The materials cost almost 550 Euros, which they gathered in time and completed with the wedding gifts.

## Dealului, Tîrgu Mures

Peter Balogh is not a typical leader. This is not so because he has a mobile phone, but because he uses the work hours for community - compulsory if they want to obtain the Minimum Guaranteed Income - for cleaning and minimum facilities of the Romany community in Dealului. The lawn surrounding the houses is impeccable and the well stands on a concrete platform surrounded by a fence. Moreover, the path to the well is strewn with ceramics carefully set in the ground. Their background is reflected in the construction-quality: tiled brick houses with wooden gables.





At the end of the clay pit of the brickyard, the ground is almost falling over the excavators standing below. The people who have nowhere to go live here. There is also a playground: two swings and a bar, taken from the town by the village hall. Every summer there is a group of Scotsmen that comes to build a house. However, the land belongs to the brickyard and beyond there is the forest; if you go and steal wood, you are jailed. In every village, there are people jailed for having stolen wood. In the forest, three kilometers away, there are some Romanies living in tents. A child died of cold last winter.





## Geoagiu



The Romany community located on the Geoagiu River is at least one hundred years old. Screened by a concrete fence stretching along two kilometers and done during communism “not to disturb the tourists”, the community counts around 1,000 people. Although it is relatively central, typologically, is an enclave. The living standard is quite different, from houses similar to those of the majority, situated in the confluence area between the communities, to utterly poor hut at the other end. As every-

where, they illustrate an almost perfect hierarchy. The pictures show the intermediary area.

Some of the Geoagiu Romanies are brick makers. However, they use other materials in building their houses, which points to the fact that the traditional material is not used extensively in the area. The bricks are expensive, because they are burnt, and the fire is made of wood, which is also expensive. They include a lot of work and its quality and strength is reduced in time. Some cannot afford any building material, though. They use disused logs, other materials, and earth.

There are no facilities in the community. The Romanies work to obtain the Minimum Guaranteed Income in other parts of the town, never on their territory. Because there is no ditch, the houses are flooded periodically. The absence of cohesion, of tools, and an authoritative leader does not encourage community activities. There is no playground and meeting place for the community except for one table standing at the entrance of the Romany street. There is



also a shop selling oil, sugar, bread, and salt. We've encountered a rare case in the Romany communities: an eighty-five year old woman living alone.



## **Village Balteni, Contesti, Dîmbovita County**

### **Community type**

It is a “para-rural” community, in the village outskirts, 3 km away from the village center, along a side road of Bucharest-Targoviste highway. The rapid growth of the Romanies, the change of the habitat and the limits surrounding the nucleus of the settlements (the highway and the county road) indicate it as a future self-contained settlement.

The village is mainly populated by coppersmiths. It is a traditional community where the language is spoken and the traditional costume is worn. They have a leader, though not the same as 15 years ago (the mayor commented saying that they were also influenced by the Revolution, so they chose some-

one else). Some of their houses stand on the left side of the road (north-south, to Conțești) while others on the right. Partially, there is a spatial continuity with the rest of Bălteni village, that should be obvious because the village was developed by the Romanians; however, the change is visible and vigorously expressed in the territory limit.

They have brick, one-room houses, recalling the adobe hut. Being beyond the first level of poverty, they have an annex, a sort of storage place used as access hall and summer kitchen, where they store all sorts of things and food (left picture). There is a double-glazed window that has only one sheet of glass. The walls are decorated with the stencil by an old woman, who received some fat for her work. It is rather clean, mainly because there are only four people.



Bălteni. Decoration by pattern.  
Each house has a different pattern.

### Community background

On the Romany community's place, there were Romanians – there are still 3-4 owners, we were told. The rapid demographic growth of the Romanies led to the migration of the Romanian families, most of them abandoning their households. The community started in the 1960s, when nomadic families established there. The communist policies tried to help them settle down there, and they tried to do so in Lungulețu and Brezoaiele, but failed, because the Romanian population did not accept them.

Before the area was inhabited by Romanians. *"Initially, they used to come, put up the tents and leave. The police were after them and brought them back. The people (the Romanians) started to sell their houses unofficially, that is why they cannot have electricity installed, because the company will only accept to do it provided you are an owner."* (Interview with the mayor)

The population increased rapidly, amounting to 1,000 people in 2005. In the last census, there were about 1,000 Romanies out of the 5,600 inhabitants of

the village. As the mayor says, there are 3 to 7 children in a family. However, I found families with 8 to 9 children.

Currently, the Romanies come from elsewhere, steal, and do crimes. *“They are chased by the police and settle here. The police are nice to them, this is why they came here; in other regions, they will no accept them because the do crimes. However, the police do not punish them for not having an identity card.”*

The presence of textile elements is a reminiscence of the tent. It is the handiest way to cover a void, and its lack of efficiency does not seem to bother the tenants. Though at first sight, the access free, from one yard to the next, we were invited back when we wanted to gather more information about this house and the adjoined tent, which is a sort of workshop. There are three different types of textures on the façade, and people keep on complaining: “Look sir, we have not even a sound door”. Soon, I found that the person who had invited me in and gave me all sorts of details did not live there in fact.



During the communist regime, they used to make brooms, kitchenwares, and buckets, which they sold in the neighboring villages. Now, most of them live on the *Minimum Guaranteed Income* (MGI). Unfortunately, as the mayor says, they cannot control even the work for the community, because the Romanies know they will get money from the state and that does not depend on the village council. That is why the mayor pointed out that they had better give the money for various jobs in construction or cleaning the public space than “give them the MGI and they sweep their tents, because they refuse other activities”. (Interview with the mayor).

### **The Household**

Most households are composed of parents and children, and if the latter are married, they live with their parents. Those having a one-room house, live there (three) in appalling conditions – earth on the floor, rat outlets, cracked walls, etc. Minimum three people inhabit a room (two parents and one child).

The usual housing type, in advanced state of poverty, is the one-room house. There are also houses with two or three rooms, made of brick, with outbuildings or passageways. Many households that are surrounded by a fence, but also that do not have one, have a tent used as an “outbuilding”: kitchen, stable, storage place for logs. The village is divided by a road that connects it to the administrative center.

The one-room houses are made of adobe glued with earth. They have gable roofs whose pediments are hidden by textiles. They have no utilities (water, sewerage system). There is an improvised connection to electricity, but not all of them. They use logs for heating. There is no running water, but a few wells in the community. They have no privies in the yard, but farther away in the field. In fact, there is nothing really built. Women say it's a shame to be seen. When asked if they liked a toilet in the house, they answer affirmatively.

Laundry is done in the yard, in a tub. There is no river but just some wells in several yards. As to personal body hygiene, they say they boil water and wash in turn in the house. The people in Bălteni are cleaner than those from other communities are. Their huts, even the poorest ones, do not reek (only some of the people we came close to). Yet, you can see that they try to be

clean; they spread their laundry to dry everywhere, as they do in the Romany communities. The women wear traditional skirts, carefully ironed, and necklaces, which are not impressive.



#### **Income/subsistence sources**

Most of them have animals – they breed horses in improvised tents and have poultry (turkeys and geese). They do not own land and are not occupied in farming. Due to repeated thefts, the field in the proximity is no longer cultivated. An important source of income is disused iron collecting, which they sell directly. Recently, some community members have

opened firms selling disused iron. They prefer it to other activities because they can “make some quid quickly” (interview with the mayor). This source of income is reflected in their clothes and changes in their houses (tin roof with



decoration that should make their well-being conspicuous). "Since they've taken to it, some changed. Some are impeccable. Some differences among them have led to house building". (Interview with the mayor).

### Division of labour in the household

Women seem more authoritative. One told me she had been engaged to two men to build her house, and she was alone now. They perceive men as being womanizers and there are many divorces in the community.

Decoration is extremely important. Even if the building is not over, the house should have a distinctive element, mostly traditional – the little tower, the paintings – but also modern: the reinforced concrete arch, possibly taken from a public building. We should note their indifference as to the position of the voids on the façade, and total disregard to the idea of gravitational flow. The concrete decorative elements are handmade by the owner (that is what he said), while the roofs done by some Romanian artisans, as they said.

### Interaction with the exterior

The community members are not employed; the possible employees are cautious due to some anti-social acts they might do. There is, however, a difference inside the community, some say that their peers *steal from the villagers' crops*. The mayor confirmed, saying that it was a state of tension in the village.



Our trip in the village, facilitated by the mayor, showed the Romanies' openness to dialogue; yet it soon turned to their claims for help:

1. Regulation of the property status and identity status (some are not recorded in Conțești village);
2. Jobs;
3. Help to obtain damages for those who were deported in the Second World War.

### Programmes

I noticed their respectful attitude to the mayor, which can be explained by the fact that they have no community leader to represent them and be acquainted with their social problems. The mayor, in his turn, was concerned by their

extreme poverty condition; however, the relation *mayor-community* seemed rather ambiguous when we met together. The mayor mentioned some programs that were carried on:

1. **“Health comes first”** aims to establish a dispensary that could control them periodically and provide minimal sanitary education, meaning, family planning, and first aid;
2. A project meant to create employment – the building of a bakery. The tone the mayor adopted to present the improvement projects for the Romany population could be interpreted, at first sight, as a sort of screen, a censure between the documentation team and the community under scrutiny.

### Narrative

90% are Orthodox, and only two families are Pentecostal. There is no dispensary in the community. As they are not owners and have no identity card, they cannot obtain residence in the locality, so some cannot access the MGI. On the other hand, their having no identity card makes them feel they can slip away easily.

The children of the Romany family attend school, yet they abandon it quickly (over 50 Romanies in the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> form). However, girls do not attend school for fear of not being harassed by the boys who are not from their community (interview with a woman, a girl's mother). They gold Turkish coins, yet not many, and they use them to buy girls. They have golden teeth of which they are very proud, because “they show beautifully”. They are made by “a shoe-maker who comes here sometime” and seem to be done by covering the healthy eyeteeth.

The income sources are the MGI and the sums from selling disused iron. The property has not a clear legal status, meaning that they have just two property acts for the land and non-legalized papers from the Romanians who sold them. Some are not even recorded in the registers for population evidence.



In cases of extreme poverty, we noticed a medium level of cohesion by helping the needy with food. We were helped to get to those huts and they insisted that we should get to know those families. They are allowed to spend their time somewhere else, where they can warm, and only come to sleep in their half-frozen huts. It seems that their leader is not very influential. Although they live in extreme poverty, the death rate is lower than that of the Romanian families.

They usually marry when 12-15, at 8-9 years old they are engaged. Some are literate, which explains their driving license. The members of the Romany community do not actually accept that they are represented by someone in particular. There could be two explanations:

1. no one is involved in solving their problem (Romany leader, another kind of leader, mayor);
2. dissociation from any local authority (Romany leader, another kind of leader, mayor); when the research team from Bucharest came (with a camera, and a video camera) and appeal to the foreigner from the center to make remarks about the community living conditions.







**Cetățeni, Zone II.**

In any poor community there is a center of poverty. Poverty level is known by everyone: Haralambie. He was no longer there; he and his family were taken to hospital. The house was abandoned, however, no one would inhabit it, meaning the neighbors, a 9 member family, ill with tuberculosis, living in the next one-room hut; the house was crumbling.

# Village Cetateni, Arges County

## Type of community

Self-contained settlement, 3-4 km from Cetățeni, on the River Dambovita. The community is divided in four sub-areas according to (1) *size*; (2) *property status*; (3) *administrative dependence of the inhabited territory*; and (4) *the poverty level*. Most houses have only one room; there are also one-floor houses, finished or under construction, or *better looking*, with two rooms.

## The settlement background, size

The community was inhabited by „rudari“ (woodworkers) since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when they settled there. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were 5 huts. The woodworkers living outside the village executed some activities in the forest (cutting of trees). In 1975, 105 were registered, while today, there are 800 outside the village (the mayor gave us a number of 811 members).

## Zone I

It is the largest (around 50-60 houses). It has its own primary school. Most inhabitants have property documents (*mayor's words*). In 1945, 11 families were given property. Supposedly, the 4 ha given by the town hall dispersed, and the properties diminished. Here there are the poorest houses. The properties are surrounded by fences, and the households clean in most cases. We found that the one-storey houses have no strength structure. The access to the road is through wooden bridges, one that could be accessed by car.

## Zone II

It is the third in size on the Dambovita River. The houses stand at the foot of the mountain, around or even on the archeological site. Most of them are one-room houses with a porch sometimes. There are almost 20 households, of which 3-4 surrounded by a fence (of 2 meters without visibility from the lane) and have more than one room. In most families, established before 1989, there are 7-9 children. In the families established in late 1990s, the number of children decreased a lot, up to 1 to 3 children. The access to the road is made through a wooden bridge. The houses stand on the territory of Stoenesti village.

Haralambie's neighbors. It begins an area comprising about 40 households of this kind.





### **Zone II**

The second in size, also along the Dambovită River and at the foot of the mountain, counts around 25 houses. The buildings, partly surrounded, were built before 1989 in brick and seemed solid. Some of the families from Zone III are members of a neo-Protestant denomination, which explains their

openness to dialogue with the exterior. Some of them worked in a mine, in Campulung or in various farms as full-time workers in Baragan or Dobrogea.

### **Zone IV**

Is the last in size (20 houses); it is located along a tributary of the Dabbovită River. There are one-room houses. The families have up to 9-16 members.



The house is similar to the traditional Turkish shelters, *gecekondu*. They are made up of a room for living and storage, usually windowless. The main room is extremely clean. It is inhabited by a young couple with a five years old child. The decision to live a better life does not seem viable, at least from the house point of view. A corner of the house is already above the river course.

### The inter-zonal connections

Between the four zones there are kin ties; then through kinship, they also converted to another denomination. Zone III is periodically visited by the members of the neo-protestants from the center of Cetățeni or other localities. Some woodworkers of Zone II state that they are not on good terms with the monastery abbot, (*"The abbot will not let us build"*). In Zone II, there is the property of the monastery Cetățuia Negru-Vodă, the depot of the cable car that carries building materials to the monastery. Before it obtained the property, the monastery was in good terms with one of the average families: two rooms, kitchen, television, outbuilding, car, etc.

### Community leader

The woodworkers' community has no gypsy leader; instead, they are represented by a leader who is also councilor of the village hall. The leader (nick-named *Bombonel /Sugar baby!*) lives in Zone III. When asked about their relation with the town hall and the monastery, he says that both the mayor and the abbot helped them when they needed. The community representation in the village hall is recognized by the mayor and less by the community members. He has no authority. The current leader's father was a community deputy. He called some masons to have a house built (see the picture), the biggest in the area at that time. All houses in Zone III use brick as color and architectural elements.

### Inter-zonal perception

The members of the four zones I called I, II, III, and IV have a different perception on the territories they inhabit. Those of zones I and III say about those in zones II and IV that are *wretched*.

In our trip in three of the four zones, we were accompanied by the mayor, which reflected in the reserved attitudes of the people as to the authority concern to solve their administrative problems. The Zones I, II, and III are located in the territory of Cetățeni village. The mayor presented the following situation: *The border between the two villages has been separated the woodworker community for almost 30-40 years. Some years ago the negotia-*





*tions were started to clarify the unclear status of the three zones we identified. Cetățeni village came up with two solutions:*

*1. the Stoenești village hall should take the members of the Romany community; 2. the Stoenești village will be given the territory occupied by those zones. The Stoenești village hall declined both proposals.*

When we talked with the woodworkers of zone III, who seemed eager to get involved in the community problems, they told us that the territories with an unclear status initially belonged to Cetățeni village, and the border was moved because they did not want to allow the Romanies to choose the mayor, since they were about to exceed in number the Romanian population due to their birth rate.

### **Income/subsistence sources**

The current occupation is wood fruit and mushroom picking, processing of timber, spoon making. They have animals (hens, geese, turkeys, pigs, and horses). There are also many dogs. In summer, they work in the village farms, yet they say that there are not many who employ them because they work on their own land. Many of them live on the MGI.

### **Identity**

Most Romany population of the four zones define themselves as Romanian, also proved by the last census (source: the village mayor). The language is no longer spoken and they do not wear their traditional clothes that could mark them against the Romanians. They are proud of their children "it's the only good thing a man can leave behind" (old man) and it's a sin to abort. A part from the community (mainly in zone I and zone III, and only one case in zone II) belongs to the neo-Protestant denomination. The others are Orthodox and go to Cetățuia Negru-Vodă monastery.

### **The relation with local authorities**

In every place we went, we noticed that people were not contented with the

mayor and his way of administrating. It is possible that if the community problems are dealt with by the community leader as local councilor he will be a buffer between the community and village hall, a bureaucratic link that will make the mayor more responsible. The fact that we were asked if the mayor could be ousted proved that they mistrusted him.

Some of the inhabitants of zones II and III say that they will move, if they are allocated land somewhere else. Their words contradict the mayor's who said he offered the woodworkers a meadow with utilities (road, electricity, water) inside the village; the offer regulated the property status as well (they would be given property documents), but the community refused it.

Another discontent of the woodworkers (especially in zone III) concerns the taxes imposed by the local council for those owning a car, a wood cutter and other devices meant to help them obtain extra income. The taxes rise to 1,000,000 lei (28 Euro). Those paid the MGI the tax is deducted from it (the MGI is 1,600,000 lei - 46 Euro).

### **The community problems**

As concerns the woodworkers' community, we identified a high expectation level as to (1) *clarification of property status*, (2) *improvement of living conditions*, (3) *improvement of sanitary education* and especially (4) *state intervention in matters of employment*.

We have not visited zone IV. However, you some similarities with zone II as concerns housing problems (extreme poverty).

### **Utilities**

Until 1990, the woodworkers are very poor. They could only make some money by working on the farms in Baragan and Dobrogea or in neighborhood or Cîmpulung Muscel. After 1990, they were connected to electricity; they have television, and use wood for heating. There are a few wells, but not everybody has one. They do the laundry in the yard and wash them in the river. There are only a few privies. Again, they do not have places to store the garbage. In most case, that is thrown away on the riverbank or behind the rocks of the mountains (the archeological site is affected in this respect.)

### **Housing**

In most cases, 9-10 people live in one room. In the houses with more rooms, the parents live in one room, separated from their children (the case of one family with 5 rooms, 9 children, and neo-Protestants). The mayor reminded of the idea that community work should be converted in house building for the



Romany community. Our brief remarks point to low cohesion, so the project is not feasible.

The members of zone III say there is no room to build, one of the houses being built in the lane. Some of them think that if one of them would be on fire, all of them will burn down because they are too packed. As in other zones, the house is made of one room inhabited by the whole family. They were built until the 1990s.

In general, whenever they want to build a house, they never appeal to a professional. *I built my house*, is the general remark (case zone II, a one-room house with a porch and a pantry accessed from inside). In zone I, we visited a one-storey house, unfinished. They did not ask an architect's advice for the design. The building was done by neighbors, relatives (neo-Protestant family). The house was not plastered, showing its precariousness (there was not a minimum concrete belt between the two floors).

In zone III, due to land configuration that offers no chance for a minimal urban structure, the buildings stand on awkward sites.

### **Health, hygiene**

The community members are affiliated to the dispensary of Cetățeni. village. They can take water from the wells. Some of the newly weds are aware of the family planning, explaining their choice by economic causes.

### **Fears, worries**

Water: their closeness to the Dambovită River makes them fear possible floods. Fire: the packed settlement makes them fear fire. The local authorities: unclear legal status of their houses; they live in a village, yet recorded in a different one.

### **Projects**

As the mayor said, no development project was drawn up. There was an initiative to build a bridge over the river. The project was carried out partially (they brought in a disused bridge from a different part of Argeș County).





**INTERVENTION PRINCIPLES  
&  
stages of dwelling  
optimal leap  
evaluation  
decision  
options  
measurments  
preliminary urbanism**



**Șercaia, Brașov**

„We work for two and a half million (70 Euro/month). It's up to the boss for how long... But I'm happy to have a job.“

## Stages of Dwelling

The dwelling standards closely follow the individual's life standard. In fact, the dwelling standard expresses the latter quite accurately and it can thus be included in the level of income/aspirations/education after a simple visit to someone's house. The manner in which a person relates to space belongs to his/her *weltanschauung* and has qualitative dimensions that could be described and quantified through special indices: spatial differentiation among generations and family members, cleanliness, the presence of formal and access spaces, storage and spaces for body care, etc.

In the particular case of the poor Romany, there is a stereotype involving a divider between the house quality and the general life standard. The majority seems to have noticed and pass judgment on these poor people: "they like to live well, they eat, drink, and dance", but they don't like to work and have their houses repaired. Empirically, we can say that this opinion is false, being a part of town mythology and pointing to frustrations focused on a certain group that *bears otherness*.

Any family desires to develop its living standards; moreover, both urban and rural social strata and various sub-cultures make it a purpose in itself. The presence of several layers of dwelling, even a fine-tuning of the standard is very visible within the free market context, because it does not only offer and negotiate equipment levels but also other associated values. For instance, an advertisement about a "two bathroom apartment with western finishing" does not only suggest the size but also the comfort and facilities it can provide, which places it higher on the market. Within the same physical space, one can pass from one level to another. As to equipment level, we can see an even finer tuning among various houses. Our remarks point to the relativity of the current testing methods that consider eight equipment units to define the living standard. Sometimes it is misleading to place a subject on the scale according to equipment units, total floor area, and even income.

The problem of individual, family or community living conditions can be described in terms of quality and included in a hierarchy where the actors have precise places. However, the hierarchy is relative, being conditioned by factors of influence and local values, yet it is governed by non-relative values, mostly quantifiable, such as income, heritage, education, information.

This model of *scale of dwelling* will help us to analyze the communities and defend the intervention principles.



Metaphorical  
model used by  
VET (Villes en  
transition)

The stepped social accession model can be associated with some rules resulting from empirical observation.

#### **Lemma 1** *of optimal leap*

Steps cannot be jumped over. Any drives to force on advancement would lead to turning back on a lower step. There is a multitude of examples to sustain this statement: the maladjustment to living in a block of flats is characteristic of an important part of Romanian population. In cases of extreme poverty, when the individual started from the lowest step, the advancement to a higher living standard resulted in the destruction of the living space. Certain individuals, even generations have to rapidly climb up this stair of living. The problem points to some social categories that are given apartments and find themselves unable to cover the maintenance costs over a short period. This is the case with the Romany working in various factories during the communist period; today they return to their huts.

#### **Lemma 2** *of visibility*

An individual can only step on if the step is visible. The desire to advance is given by the number of steps one can see and the distance one has to move forward from the start.

Corollary: The force of attraction of a normal standard living model is given by its proximity to extreme poverty living and its chance to access to it by climbing several intermediary steps.

#### **Lemma 3** *of horizontal advancement*

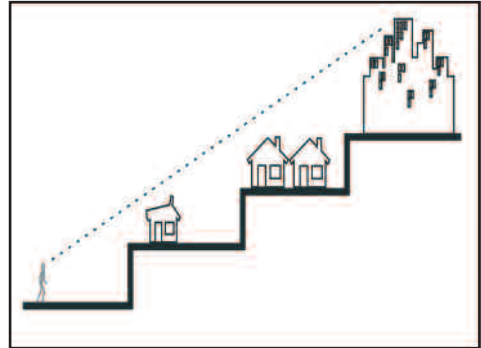
To leap on the next step, you should stay at its foot. Every step has a length that has to be covered entirely if you want to leap on the next. The agglomer-

ation level can affect the speed and the desire to advancement by introducing a subjective distance.

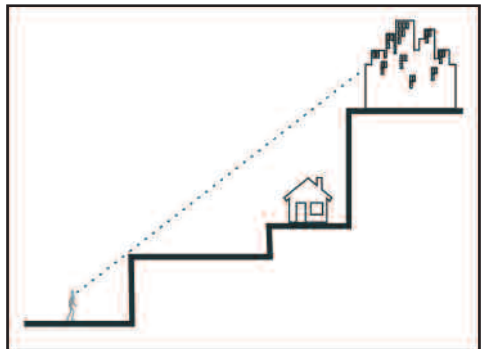
Normal visibility does not necessarily involve the chance to normal advancement. Ideally, advancement should follow a smooth course.

For instance, the existence of many types of apartment buildings reflects a continuity of close standards favoring ascending and descending dynamics based on small steps.

From the point of view of living, in Romania there are numerous layers of population under a decent standard, which tends to become permanent. The difference between those on the lowest steps and those on relatively decent steps is huge, being a barrier against an ascending social mobility. Intermediary steps are needed to correct this situation. They will allow ascension and create a permanent ascending effect.



Good visibility, impossible advancement

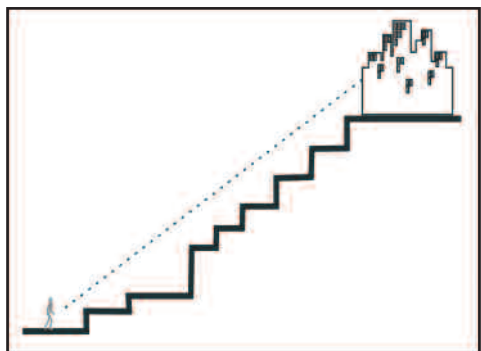


Poor visibility, impossible advancement

### **The escalator model. The minimum and maximum leap**

We have insisted on the importance of introducing families or communities in an ascending trend from the viewpoint of social mobility; at the same time, we stated that the change should not have a "hinc et nunc" impact but lead to sustainable development.

The purpose of the leap the community could make according to this project motivates a further action, from bottom to top, from the individual, the poor community eager to develop. Thus, the initial, "artificial" step on the



Good visibility, possible advancement

escalator will be followed by community's real steps. However, the initial step should be optimal and motivate one to take action.

Two dangers should be avoided. On the one hand, if the step is too small, the community state will be preserved, being followed only by temporary, epidemic improvement. The settlements made up of site barracks represent an improved image as compared to cardboard and plastic covered houses; if the place, living conditions, and the dwellers' state will not change, their state of mind is sometimes worse than before. If there is only a slight change, they will feel that nothing will change on long term. The change of one type of hut for another one with more technological endowments is not a true solution. There is a danger that people will become insensitive to change.

On the other hand, the step can be overwhelming. Even if the houses have all the necessary facilities but the maintenance costs cannot be covered, they will slip back to the dwellers' economic level. Consequently, if the houses go well beyond the economic potential of the future owners, the impact will be negative. In many cases, the tenants sell various belongings to get some money to survive, such as windowpanes, radiators, doors, electric devices. If the material value of the project is too high, it will surpass the tenants' assimilation potential. The major task of the project coordinator is to couple the economic level of a target group and the house equipment level. A new type of living should be based on research and not on political decisions or the application of some established standards according to various general norms. Romania's current situation is not so different from that of other European countries and is very telling in this respect. Too high living standards, as they are defined by the Act of Housing, involve a much too big leap for a social group, too numerous to be considered a minority that cannot be integrated.

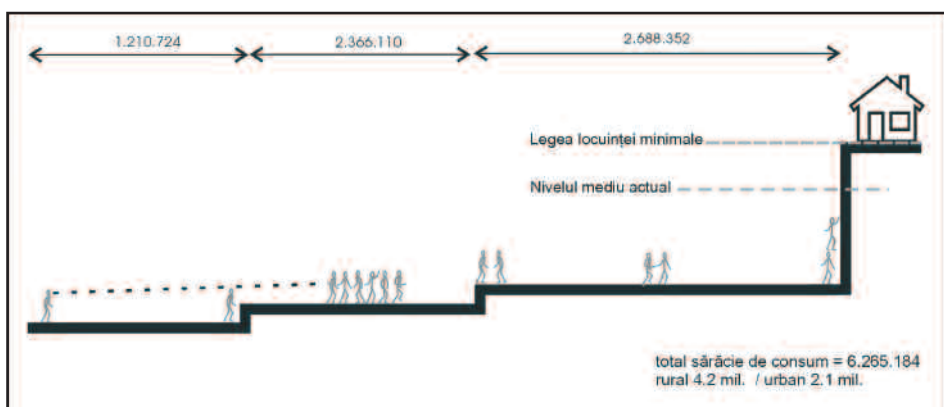
### **How can we change the model of social mobility?**

The current condition points to reduced mobility, generated by "lack of visibility" and "crowding" on steps; thus, if someone stands on a low step cannot possible see a change to climb a better step. If, objectively, this is possible, it is not subjectively perceived. Thus, the individuals feel trapped on the level they stand. They learn to cooperate and adjust to the permanent state of poverty and develop status-quo strategies.

If a family/community is introduced on the escalator and finds that there is some chance to access a better condition, it will be motivated to develop not only adjustment but also advancement strategies. The strategies of getting out of poverty start with the choice of the right step. These projects should be so

transparent that people understand that they could reach a higher step. Anytime someone moves to a higher step, he/she should see the next higher one and the fact that he can reach it. Such strategies motivate the individual's actions by making him aware of his potential to access a better living standard.

The housing projects should focus on multiple layers of poverty and offer alternatives for the families with various income. As the families develop through their own efforts and accumulate more resources, they should be given a chance to move forward on the escalator.



The state of poverty in Romania and its relation to the housing problem: the number of the poor is high (agglomeration), the distance between steps is big (slow horizontal advancement), there is no intermediary step (impossible optimum leap), and the visibility is reduced (there is no point of attraction).



## Intervention Principles

The heightened dynamics of the population stricken by extreme poverty (demographic indices, mobility) gives a relative short-term validity to the statistics following the analysis of the subject. Furthermore, the rather *elusive character* of extreme poverty should not be overlooked. Although people are inclined to claim their poverty, in the case of extreme poverty people have a reduced capacity to express themselves or can hardly do that, from either physical (bed ridden), psychological (speaking disabilities, severe depression) or cultural reasons (they can't speak the language or have poor vocabulary). Thus, any statistical analysis turns to be difficult and, besides the capacity to establish a quotient and the development trend, it is relatively irrelevant for any general strategy. However, we are going to draw up some **intervention principles** able to help us build an intervention strategy within poor Romany communities:

### The Principle of Measure Package (1)

The first principle underlines the fact that any intervention consists in a **measure package**. They become operational only if they are applied over a compact span of time. At the end of the period, either the targeted person or community should have made a quality leap on the socio-economic scale (or, for communities, there should be a large number of members that have increased the life standard significantly) to make the intervention worthwhile. The measurement of the effect should be carried on in terms of **real progress** and **stability** (quantifiable dimensions).

The dwellings were considered first as importance and investment value, but due to the absence of community service modernization, of solutions to judicial status, education, family planning, jobs, health services, they are just deluxe cans for poverty and misery. However, we insist on priorities leading to urban-planning and dwelling solutions, since we have noted that in most cases the interventions have an educational, formative, and sanitary nature. An opinion trend has developed and asserted that it is only education that can solve the problems of poverty and social exclusion. The state of houses we have visited during our documentation stage has persuaded us that the dwelling improvement would cut off the vicious circle of social exclusion. It seems that the building of new houses is not a solution to extreme poverty.

**The measure package should show a real leap of the community and guarantee its stability. The zero priority of the package is the achievement of community planning interventions.**

The solution should be looked for in a concerted action including:

- Correct organization of the community space (roads and alleys, parcels, evacuation of wastes under safe sanitary conditions, of rainwater and garbage).
- Job opportunities.
- Access to education and health services.
- Appropriate maintenance

### **The Principle of Spatial and Social Integration (2)**

The second principle concerns *integration*. It is desirable to have the essential inclusion services (health care, education, vocational training, and social care) within the precincts of the disadvantaged dwellings, but if the community segregation is big, they should be established on a border. Their location in the majority territory, although creates access difficulties, is an integration factor.

**The location of public spaces defines the integration index. Such services should be an interface to majority.**

### **The Principle of Ethnic Non-discrimination (3)**

The problematic of the low standard or severely deteriorating dwelling is not only specific to the Romany communities. A thorough analysis of spatial distribution of sub-standard dwelling, of the living conditions of those falling in the extreme or severe poverty categories, from either majority or other ethnic groups in the sub-perimeters and enclaves, shows that the solutions should be rather integrated and applied on well-defined territories than based on ethnic criteria. Relocation on ethnic criteria leads to ghettos and creates those premises favoring exclusion and ethnic discrimination.

The programmatic strategies should consider the fact that any spatially based project (houses, communities, evictions, transmutations) targeting an ethnic group could have counter-effects of segregation, exclusion, and ghetto formation.

**The choice of terrains, spatial proximity among communities, the presence of meeting facilities (schools, medical institutions) should take into account the basic intentions of open societies, opposed to discrimination, exclusion, and formation of ethnic-social enclaves (in our case, those of extremely poor Romany).**

### **The Principle of Particularization and Diversification (4)**

The fourth principle establishes that any intervention is targeted to a particular community consisting of a diversity that should not be oversimpli-

fied. We need a particular solution for each community according to its type, size, investment amount, local development strategies, etc. If we work with standard solutions, we cannot tune it to basic and minority communities, to local availability and building standards.

There is a multitude of poverty layers within a group. If we deal with significant differences, it is necessary that an *optimal progress* should be established for each family. To create a kind of *escalator* effect, the steps should be visible. For this reason, they should coexist within or in the proximity of that site.

In other words, it is not advisable that you should build a settlement with extremely poor people on the border of an extremely poor neighborhood or in the outskirts where there is no dwelling, cultural, or economic development place, where there is no superior level/step able to work as a *force of attraction* that should be sited in the proximity, if we expect its effectiveness.

The wide range of methods to fight severe and extreme poverty should consist of social housing, temporary housing, lower-cost housing, shelters, terrain leasing, assistance with building materials, etc.

Each indicator should be given some parameters according to the extant situation. In every community, there are cases where a similar solution could be applied and demand a special attention and solutions. The absence of such strategies (i.e. different spatial configurations) can induce major pressures on the built environment. It is impossible to design separately for each family; however, it is wrong to force different social cases into a unique spatial and dwelling formula.

**Standardization and simplification of dwelling emphasizes negative and destructive tendencies in dwelling. Homogeneity leads to decompensation.**

### **The Principle of Optimal Leap (5)**

Every leap should be directed to the next step. If you leap long, there is a risk to return to the initial condition by triggering a maladjustment crisis (decompensation). Unfortunately, there are several cases when the Romany communities were moved to a new house without any positive reaction at all. It is all wrong to blame on those communities.

**The definition of maximum and minimum leap is the main methodological task in an intervention on a given case.**

### **The Principle of Continuity (6)**

In the first stage when the *leap* is made, the intervention should be

massive and well defined. It only stops the moment *stabilization* is reached. The “undecided” or on and off interventions, where the priorities were not identified correctly, are just mere waste of means.

**Any intervention plan should be drawn on middle or long term periods and necessarily contain evaluation measures of post-occupational efficiency.**

### **The Co-operative Principle (7)**

Viable solutions to poverty and social exclusion could be only reached through a partnership between local authorities and the associations of civil society (ethnic, tenants, charity, religious). The absence of civil society representatives blocks the implementation of *measure package*, since no local authority in Romania has either the capacity or the means to produce positive transformation of such large groups with serious problems.

However, participative intervention, the commonest theme of such projects, is less operational in cases of extreme poverty. This kind of approach can hinder those cases when internal cohesion is weak and labour capacity is extremely reduced. As work principle, we shall remember the situation when the intervention time is long enough and the number of involved mediators is big.

**Communication with both the community and civil society is a chance to solve problems in a sustainable manner. Their direct implication can be done following a correct evaluation of real capacities and not as an infallible principle.**

### **Action Proposals**

Here are some critical aspects of extreme poverty housing that should be included in political strategic programs and by the administrative and legislative framework:

- The poverty stricken population (including housing and community aspects) is of about 1,000, 000 people, 200, 000 families of 4-5 people respectively.
- Unlike the other poverty segments that tend to decrease, extreme poverty and deterioration of living conditions (houses, locality, and environment) tends to increase, a thing that should be well documented by studies and inquiries.
- The current programs do not thwart the flow towards settlements/ghettoes with extreme poverty or the formation of other spon-

taneous settlements and reproduction of extreme poverty.

- Since there is no program to monitor the houses for the disadvantaged, the Romany included, after they had been given to them, and no comprehensive actions of social integration, although much money was put in it, it seems that the result was used just as an advertising means, or diluted and cancelled away in time.
- It is necessary that the provisions of the Act for Minimal Housing should be extended by such provisions that could encourage “the first leap”, from spontaneous formation of shelters of non-constructive materials to houses adjusted to poverty conditions.
- International experience recorded in documents, international conference interventions emphasize the effectiveness of programs based on:
  - Integrated urban planning
  - Access to basic community equipments (healthy water, telephone, transport).
  - Regulation of property and stability problems.
  - Coordination with social programs and those meant to produce jobs.
  - Access to education and health care.
  - Use of intermediary technologies.
  - Granting funds and loans in materials for self-generated building of intermediary architectural design concepts with technicians that should supervise the housing building.
  - Starting from their experience with programs in Bosnia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Vietnam, the World Bank experts estimate that the grants/loans in materials of about 2,000 USD along with basic community facilities can sustain the guided building of the first nucleus of houses adjusted to extreme poverty conditions. The field observation of this study confirms the estimation.

It is necessary that the Housing Act should be completed to allow this kind of intervention. To maintain the higher standards of building, it should contain definitions of the acceptable intervention standards and the terms under which it should be carried out.

Moreover, free legal and planning consultancy and information would open way to the planning of semi-legal settlements, of which some are too large or too old to be demolished or radically reorganized.

In this respect, we propose a new job, the *ex officio architect*, similar to that of ex-officio lawyer; it can ensure minimum coherence to any building activity, including that of huts. The qualified architects and engineers would be an educational factor and produce a long-term effect in spatial organization.

## Urban Housing Policy Unit Recommendations

Urban Housing Policy Unit – World Bank

Ellen Hamilton, planner, specialist in urban poverty

Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015

Roma Housing Workshop, Budapest, 27-28 September 2004

Critical aspects and constraints in housing programs for dwelling in poor communities – vicious circles

- Aspects connected to problem magnitude:
  - 1 Informal poor communities with an increasing number and population.
  - 2 Numerous settlements in endangered, isolated grounds.
  - 3 Isolation from work and education places.
- Aspects connected to needs (supplies):
  - 1 Limited, poor quality available land.
  - 2 Building costs:
    - High codes and standards that poor people cannot possible attain.
    - Follow-up – restrained possibilities to a legal house building under legal conditions.
    - No general sketch of the settlement.
- Aspects connected to access to community utilities:
 

Restrictions to benefits/assistance/facilities conditioned by legal residence (a serious problem in illegal communities)

## What can be done?

Possible positive priorities and actions in the programs connected to housing:

- To “formalize” informal settlements adjacent to localities if possible and justified from the environmental viewpoint.
  - To make the legal construction procedure easy and intelligible.
  - To solve the unclear issues concerning the property of land and buildings.
- To improve equipments in multi-deprived areas.
  - Electricity, water, and gas supplies and building of roads in those areas where investments are justified from the economic perspective and offer legal jobs.
- To promote policies and rather unite than isolate, that is, policies addressing the poor, no matter their ethnicity (Romany, young poor families, young people from childcare institutions).

What should not be done:

- Low-cost/social houses (council houses) according to acknowledged standards
  - They are too costly as compared to poor families' income
  - They do not respond to diverse situations of big poor families
  - Taking into account the high costs, only a few are built as compared to the demand
  - They contribute to segregation and ghettoization
  - They bring about unanswerable maintenance problems

### Positive Practice

From the experience of the last year projects for community development, I have noticed several positive practices, which I keep as *complementary solutions* to the exclusively planning ones addressing intervention. In this respect, a strategy that should include certain measures could be useful:

- To instruct a body of civic agents following the model of PHARE Democracy Project (carried out by the Intercultural Institute and Timis County Council);
- To draw up and implement some comprehensive programs of community development with the participation of Romany communities. To encourage community initiatives to carry on projects that could generate jobs (e.g. *brickyards*), and maybe to set up associations to which the local council could lease some land to carry on this kind of project (see Geoagiu);
- To organize local meetings meant to stimulate cooperation between the local authority representatives and Romany representatives.

### Work Practice

- We should get in touch with the community leader. If there is no such person, they should be encouraged to form an initiative group that will elect a leader in a natural, unconstrained manner.
- It is necessary to have a mediator, an educated person, able to communicate with the administration and committed to community problems; the person should know the community directly. Ideally, that could be a missionary, a priest, or a teacher.

#### **If new houses are built, several steps should be taken:**

*Filtration* the moment of relocation marks the deep interaction between administration and community or individual – then filtration based on a valid principle takes place (income, family structure, aspirations, existence of an inventory, etc); it can reform the community;

Condition setting e.g.: I will give you the allowance, if you go to school"; "I will hire you, if you take medical tests (TBC, syphilis); "I will give you building materials, if you follow my design"; "I will give you the right to stay, if you build it", etc.



## Intervention Scenarios

### Evaluation

#### 1. The evaluation of community type

First, the topological situation will be evaluated to correctly find *the influence of distance as to the main locality and the accessibility* as determining factors for the zone development potential. Secondly, the type of community will be evaluated according to the presented typology, from the perspective of location data, history, major professions, degree of integration, etc.

#### 2. Location evaluation and data gathering

a) description of the location and the relation to vicinity. The evaluation is done on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means *very good* and 5 *very bad*.

|   | result | remarks |
|---|--------|---------|
| 1. Soil stability   |        |         |
| 2. Flooding area  |        |         |
| 3. Land declivity(general declivity)  |        |         |
| 4. Proximity to garbage pit   |        |         |
| 5. Connection to major locality   |        |         |
| 6. Water  |        |         |
| 7. Canal  |        |         |
| 8. Electricity  |        |         |
| 9. Gas  |        |         |
| 10. Telephone   |        |         |
| 11. Waste evacuation  |        |         |
| 12. Public lightning  |        |         |
| 13. Main roads  |        |         |
| 14. Side roads  |        |         |
| 15. Evacuation of rainwater (ditches)   |        |         |
| 16. Proximity to a major pollution source   |        |         |
| 17. Location that cannot be technically built (obeying safe distance and sanitary protection as to: high tension lines, water filtering station, garbage pit, railway, industrial site) |        |         |
| General evaluation  |        |         |

b) community size: number of people, number of households, number of fam-

ilies, number of children

c) evaluation of poverty and homogeneity: on a scale from one to five, simple qualitative evaluation adding the estimate percentage

d) history: date of birth, the origin of dwellers, history of their relation to authorities, etc

Data will be collected directly, within the community; they will be checked with the village-hall documents or with the community leaders. These data may vary; it is imperative that they should be recent and realistic, the only that could provide a basis for the decision making.

## **Decision making**

### **1. Who makes the decision?**

At the moment, there are many applications demanding a solution to locative situation issued by local and central authorities. Financial decisions are made by central authorities, mostly by the mayor, who is politically affiliated, while the technical ones by local authorities. Unfortunately, the lack of expertise, incomplete or wrong evaluations, and the stereotypes are acutely felt.

Those supposed to solve a situation find themselves at their first intervention, and the decision is made under pressure. As a rule, the decision on the location is made by the mayor advised by the local council, on their initiative. The argumentation for future location is thus biased by the initial choice. We'd like to mention the Dorohoi case, where the town hall decided to build on a terrain separated by an industrial site from the town; the Satul Mare case, where they built on former site used to store hospital wastes. At Pata Rât 2 (Cantonului), Cluj, the new colony is sited 4 km from town, on a 15 m strip between the railway and the road, on an industrial site with no urban facilities.

These kind of decisions are based on the fact that they have no knowledge of the land nature, stereotypes, racism, thus leading to deliberate segregation and no vision as to locality development. Although the designers tend to approach these decisions (relocation, modernization, new settlement) as political ones made by local authorities, they should be professionally filtered and integrated in the development plan of the locality. If a specialist is involved in the early stages of the decision making process, the political decision could be balanced by technical statements.

The majority community should participate in the decision-making.

**The mayor and the local council should make a strategic decision over a longer period, able to provide sustainable development. The decision is based on comprehensive professional analyses and realistic budget estimates following the counsel of the community in question and local community.**

## **2. When is the decision made?**

Decision is made only after a complete analysis and its verification by one independent evaluator at least. It is vital that the community should be informed, not necessarily with a view of obtaining its approval, improbable if it is moved, but as a means to be supported in the actions to be carried out. Decision is made only when all the solutions for the intervention involved are identified. You cannot decide evictions unless you have a place where people will be located.

## **3. What factors decide the decision?**

The observance of intervention principles has a say on the quality of the decision. The decisions should be long or medium term ones, not on a short term. They are not emergency decisions. It is essential to identify the priorities in view of the short-term impact, but the major task is long-term development. Ideally, they should not overlap the election calendar.

As the rule, the person who makes the decision can appeal to a variety of means to impose forced solutions and fewer tools to carry out long-term integration projects. The rapid solution is quite tempting for the politicians on a limited mandate. We'd like to emphasize that no matter how serious the situation might be, emergency measures will only lead to failure on a long-term. The economic analysis should lead to a rational allocation of resources for a reasonable number of cases according to the local budget. Generally, due to high costs, there is a tendency to solve but few cases. This approach is doomed to failure on long-term. The alternative is to find those solutions that may lead to mass solutions to the problems posed by such communities. It is essential that the terrain should be rationally used to find a solution and provide economic viability. Parceling is the initial, fundamental action.

## **4. Proposals**

- *Professional analysis* should come before the decision. Apparently, this is done today through the pre-feasibility study. However, the real, hand-on knowledge of the situation was replaced by brief bureaucratic approaches. To introduce the real parameters into the decision making, those in charge should be more responsible.

- The argumentation of the decision should be completed with *counseling approaches* where the Romany associations and civic society in general should be involved. To turn the poverty problem into a *matter of public debate* locally is a good strategy, though it could be rather unsettling first, it will eliminate long-term tensions and impasse.
- It is necessary that one should establish a stage of training, problem posing, and sensitivity awakening where the *county and municipal leading architects* should be involved. They should be the major actors in the local decision-making. Equally, the national study on the community diagnosis should be graphically represented on a map.
- Normative acts should be issued; they should concern the *interdiction of demolitions and evictions without a living alternative*. People should be aware of the serious consequences of such attitudes, current nowadays, would have.

## Legal aspects

The Housing Act, 114/1996 at article 41 stipulates, "A low-cost house will be done by observing the floor area and equipment in the limit of the built area, according to annex no. 1 to present act". They can be increased and decreased maximum 10%. Article 51 stipulates, "The necessity house is financed and done according to the rules for low-cost, social house".

Thus, we have the directions for the designers of new buildings. According to this act, they should consider a built area varying between 59 sq m/person for studio flats and 21.37 sq m/person for an eight-member family.

## ANNEX No. 1

### MINIMAL EXIGENCIES for houses

#### A. Minimal requisites:

1. Free individual access to the inhabitable space, without disturbing the possession and exclusive use of the owned space by another person or family; Space for rest; Space for cooking; Toilet; Access to electricity, running water, controlled evacuation of wastewater and house wastes.

## B. Minimal areas:

| Person/<br>family | Room/<br>house | Living room | Bedrooms | Eating area | Kitchens | Toilets | Storage<br>space | Floor area | Built area |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------|----------|-------------|----------|---------|------------------|------------|------------|
| no.               | no.            | sq m        | sq m     | sq m        | sq m     | sq m    | sq m             | sq m       | sq m       |
| 1                 | 1              | 18,00       | -        | 2,50        | 5,00     | 4,50    | 2,00             | 37,00      | 58,00      |
| 2                 | 2              | 18,00       | 12,00    | 3,00        | 5,00     | 4,50    | 2,00             | 52,00      | 81,00      |
| 3                 | 3              | 18,00       | 22,00    | 3,00        | 5,50     | 6,50    | 2,50             | 66,00      | 102,00     |
| 4                 | 3              | 19,00       | 24,00    | 3,50        | 5,50     | 6,50    | 3,50             | 74,00      | 115,00     |
| 5                 | 4              | 20,00       | 34,00    | 3,50        | 6,00     | 7,50    | 4,00             | 87,00      | 135,00     |
| 6                 | 4              | 21,00       | 36,00    | 4,50        | 6,00     | 7,50    | 4,50             | 93,00      | 144,00     |
| 7                 | 5              | 22,00       | 46,00    | 5,00        | 6,50     | 9,00    | 5,00             | 107,00     | 166,00     |
| 8                 | 5              | 22,00       | 48,00    | 6,00        | 6,50     | 9,00    | 5,50             | 110,00     | 171,00     |

## NOTE:

- The living room area of one-room house includes the sleeping space.
- The eating area could be included in the kitchen or the living room.
- The free minimum height of rooms will be 2.55 m, except for garrets, galleries, and niches whose volume will be of  $15 \text{ m}^3$  /person
- The habitable area is the unfolded area of living rooms. It includes the bedroom and living room areas.
- The floor area is the unfolded area, less the wall areas.
- The floor area of the house is the sum of the floor areas of rooms. It includes the living room, the bedrooms, the bathrooms, toilet, shower, kitchen, storage space, and circulation in the house. It does not include the loggia, the balconies, the threshold of door voids, passages up to 1.00 m, radiator niches, as well as those areas taken by stoves and bathroom boilers (0.50 sq m for each stove and boiler), when stoves are used for heating. In the semi-detached houses, the ramp, less the landings, is not included in the floor area.
- The total floor area, shown in Table B, is the sum of floor areas of the rooms, loggias, balconies, and part of the shared spaces of the buildings

(laundry, dry-cleaning, stairwell, including the annexes for collecting, storage, and evacuation of house wastes, the lift, etc) to which the area of exterior and interior walls is added; in case of solid fuel, the area for stoves and boilers is also added. The basement boxes and garages can be shown separately.

- The area of the main toilet will allow access to the tub for the people in wheelchairs.
- The toilet is only included if water supply and main system is provided.
- The minimum circulation width of corridors and hall inside the house will be 120 cm.
- Depending on the building location, the built areas could vary with  $\pm 10\%$ .
- The number of people/house is used for social, intervention, service, necessity houses allocation.

The annex also contains the number of toilets and quality of equipment.

They also define the electric and kitchen equipment. Finally, the shared spaces and installations are also described for apartment buildings.

**If we make a simple calculation by multiplying the minimum area accepted by this Act, that is 19.23 sq m (an eight member family minus 10%) with the number of people that need a house, 1,000,000 and the minimum cost for built area, 200 Euro/sq m, the result is 3.85 milliard Euros.**

The costs represent the houses without utilities. If we consider that more people need houses – locative poverty affecting over 2.5 million Romanians – and that most families have less than eight members, which will lead to larger built areas, sometimes double, than the sums are higher.

**Currently, the literal interpretation of some provisions of the Housing Act is the major source of the administrative and investment blockage meant to solve the housing problems of the extremely poor.**

The minimal areas, as they are defined in this Act, have a positive impact on the improvement of housing quality in Romania. They help the designer impose higher standards for the average house of the average Romanian. Unfortunately, they cannot be applied in the cases described in our work.

The only solution is to create new standards for the problems of extreme



poverty, pending on its problematic. They could be included in an Act for minimal social or reduced standard housing addressing strictly to the groups involved as a solution for a limited period of approximately 10 years. Of course, it is rather inconvenient to deal with double standards on the building market or on the design market and a terrible political risk of being accused of discrimination. However, it is the only solution that relates the economic possibilities and present needs.

The difference between today's investments and the minimum identified amount is of about 3.5 billion Euros. Under such circumstances, the only way to solve the problem of social dwelling for those extremely poor is to define new building standards.

## The two intervention options

What kind of decision can be taking as regards an extremely poor community? The most popular solutions are the demolition of illegal buildings and the eviction from those where they live illegally. No one asks where these people go or if the benefit of freeing a space is doubled by the price that the society has to pay in time to solve the social problems that the eviction has created. This is why, any eviction without relocation is not a good option. Even speedy demolition, a merely technical decision at first sight, cannot justify the administrative abandonment practiced by the authorities as an excuse for their absence of resources.

**Demolition and eviction are not decisions that can be taken without making sure they are relocated, they are just a stage in the process.**

For this reason, the two decisions are only *modernization* and *relocation*.

### Modernization *in situ* (1)

It can be taken only if all integration conditions are met or when they can be met shortly. It is recommended when the environment conditions are met, when the vicinities are favorable for increasing the living standard. It is not recommended for de-structured communities.

Modernization of blocks of flats is not recommended. In case of acute poverty in blocks of flat, the relocation of the entire community in a different living system is recommended, followed by its modernization for other needs. Those relocated in a block should have the potential to cover the costs. It is recommended for the peri-urban communities with a stability history, being tangent to the rural. Proximity to the work place is an essential criterion for the modernization decision.

### Relocation (2)

#### a) Dismantling of the compromised settlement > building of a new settlement

In fact, the operational order is vice-versa; you first build the new location and then demolish. However, the decision logic starts from its urgent dismantling. This decision should be taken when there are no development chances or are so distant that they become improbable.

#### b) Eviction of a location in housing crisis > location modernization + temporary relocation of the community > return to the initial site ("drawer" kind of operation)

It is an established model, yet with improbable results for cases of

extreme poverty because the value of the modernized construction will increase more rapidly than the family income. The post-occupation analysis shows that either the population that returns is not significant as compared to the one that left (Satu Mare) or the construction will be dilapidated again (Energeticienilor, Orăștie).

c) Eviction of a locality in housing crisis > location modernization and its use for different purposes + **community relocation** > **building of a new settlement**. It is the best solution when the communities are socially homogeneous and from the point of view of lifestyle and income. It is ideal for blocks of flats and buildings with significant economic value sited in the town center.

d) Eviction of a locality in housing crisis > location modernization and use for other purposes + **individual relocation**

It presupposes the existence of a sufficient amount of houses for those evicted; the families should not surpass the maximum leap they could afford. This process will also presuppose a sufficient amount of time because such families are large, and a mobile administrative apparatus; however, it can only work with small, unstructured, recent communities. There is a danger to lose control of the intervention results and the reorganization of the community if the dismantling process lasts too long.

## Dismantling

This decision is made when there is no chance of healthy development, even if the situation is relatively stable when it is evaluated. It is not an urgent decision. It shouldn't be done by force but by negotiating with the community. To dismantle a de-structured community involves the measure to create structures capable to sustain individual development. Energeticienilor, Zăbrăuți, Rovinari and the rest of block communities should be relocated so that the blocks could be repaired. Yet, non-discriminative and uncontrolled eviction leads to more problems than benefits.

## Ex novo building

The solution to housing problems of the Romany should be fair from the economic point of view and then according to the ethnic features. This fine-tuning with the specific housing manners and values is secondary; each designer could reach a balance between tradition and modernity for every community. In case of extreme and severe poverty, you cannot start from ethnicity to

reach a feasible living solution but from the adjustment of living to the economic standard of the family. We consider that for almost 70% of the Romany, that is, those who badly need decent housing, the housing problem should not be addressed in ethnic terms. The environment conditions have a key role in the decision-making. Again, the distance and position to the major settlement play a key-role in its development. A new settlement should observe all the above stated principles. If not, the vicious circle will close up.

### **Final remarks**

The state, the central authorities should be involved in the process of intervention centralization, control of allocation, and logistics. However, the decision should be made by local authorities that have to start from the legal framework that allows creative solutions.

For a small part of the Romany, self-generated building is a feasible solution. However, it shouldn't become a fetish or the only one to appeal to, although field literature made it a common place. Of course, the intervention philosophies are politically biased. They could result in interventions directed to those who can help themselves or to those who cannot, to complete uniformity of standards or freedom, etc. Yet, we should remember that the solutions concern the communities and acknowledge some historic injustice as regards the Romany; moreover, they should understand that extreme poverty is rather an administrative and technical problem than a political one.

**The intervention decisions should put an end to the vicious circle of poverty by sustainable solutions little, if not, related to political requirements.**

# Intervention measures

## Urbanism

### 1. choosing the place

1.1 in contiguity with the basic settlement – stuck or included in the perimeter of the basic settlement. If there is no visible housing model of the majority and a vicinity relation, these communities develop anarchic or anomalous lifestyles.

1.2 direct access to the main road, absence of any sort of obstacle – barrier, fence, gate, railway; proximity to public transport

1.3 a place with economic potential. If there are no jobs, anti-social activities emerge. It is not advisable to place such communities in exclusively residential areas. There should be some possibilities of low or medium qualified labour in the proximity.

### Location of the settlement on good quality ground

in a place without major flaws: unpleasant smells, pollution, insecure soil, flooding danger. This place should meet all the requirements of a good, healthy environment. The poor tenants should be treated as citizens with equal rights; otherwise, the initial premise of the intervention is no longer the development but their segregation. This choice is essential if we want to promote social insertion and avoid discrimination.

### 2. preliminary urbanism with essential services

For an *ex novo* settlement, the urbanism plan should include all the specific targets for a routine project. For the *modernization* operations, they include demolition, building, division into parcels, street construction. The essential goals are:

2.1 solution as to the connection with the main settlement – modernized, lighted road that can be accessible to trucks, firefighter trucks, emergency cars in every season.

2.2 parceling, road and alley construction – the dimension of the parcels and circulation is established according to community size and type.

2.3 access to water – the public wells with resistant levers (against vandalism) should be set every 200 m for mostly 20 families. The system should be designed as to be able to connect individuals later.

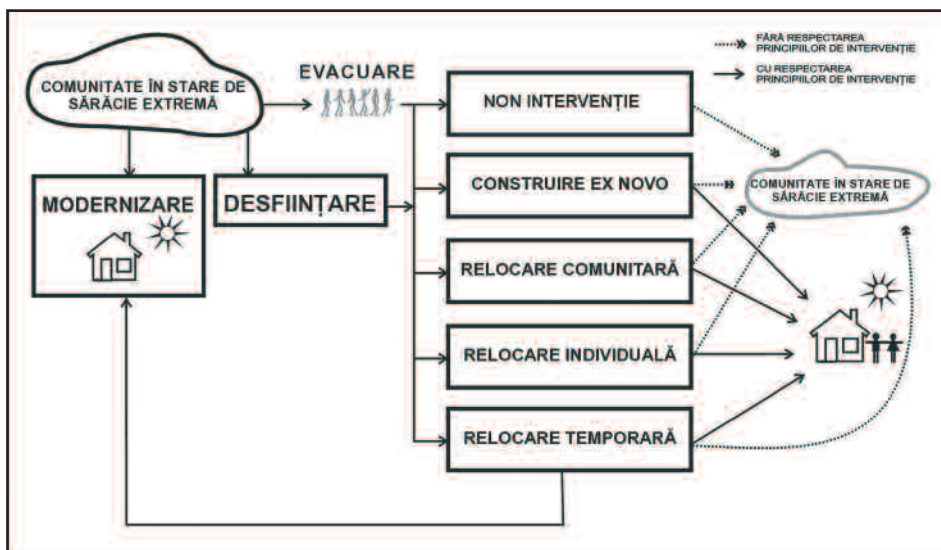
2.4 waste evacuation – to plan sanitary distances for toilets, places for household garbage, self-management system

2.5 public illumination – to plan controls over routes and safety for shared spaces

2.6 elements of vertical systematization – evacuation of rainwater in ditches, construction of some declivities for the elimination of water used in buildings, etc

For the communities that can provide labor force one should use it to fittings in the community territory.

E.g.: Dealului Street, Tg. Mureș – garbage gathering is done within the working hours required by VGM insurance. They are extremely clean. Digului Street – rainwater sewerage is improvised though the Romany work in digging ditches in other places; idem Geoagiu; Dorohoi – for the new social houses they used only Romanians for digging. However, the Romanies were assigned to dig for utilities mains and final adjustments.



### 3. configuration of public spaces

Even if there are almost no funds to do them, in a first stage, one should think about places for public services and spaces.

§ Playground (compulsory)

§ Community building (compulsory) composed of one room with sanitary function (family planning, occasional checking, medical treatment, emergency assistance), public phone, booth with bare products (bread, non-deteriorating food, goods of personal use, press)

§ Worship place – it is not compulsory, yet it makes up for a paternal figure, brings social peace. Unfortunately, we have to notice a growth in



childbirth under the impact of neo-protestant denomination.

§ Education spaces – should be integrated in mixed classes. It is advisable that they should be placed inside the main locality or on its border.

The priest and the teacher are essential figures that help community cohesion. Even if there are no special spaces, alternative ones should be created to smooth the communication with the community.

The settlements should be small. The formation of ghettos should not be encouraged, so there is no need of development resources. The goals are the urban density parameters and rational use of land. One should be very careful with the existing segregation elements or those that are bound to appear because of the development of the major settlement; they should be done away with from the start to ensure contiguity.

### **Rational use of land**

Undoubtedly, the most dramatic problem of the extremely poor communities is the quality and use of land. The extremely reduced living standard, sometimes undermined by direct threats to people's life, is generated by the land itself – in both size and quality – and the way it is used.

- The settlement (either spontaneous or directed by local decisions) on residual or deteriorated terrains (in-fills, flooding areas, garbage pits, industrial waste site, ravines, etc).
- High occupation density of the terrain that deepens the consequences of high living densities. Vicinity to latrines explains the high rate of hepatitis, infections of the digestive system, etc.
- The excessive densities and absence of reasonable distance between houses (to save electricity) account for the high rate of fires.
- Elementary systems of community management (roads, lanes between houses, ditches, etc) are rare and trouble the community leaders only accidentally.

Thus, the problem of rational use of the terrain in the case of both the extremely poor communities and the authorities in charge with local communities is not a trifle.

For the houses themselves, the advancement “in steps” to safer structures with smaller densities and rational functional division flanked by the existence of roads, water, elimination of wastes and access to community services

seems a more sustainable solution, even if it is slower. Similar terms are to be applied for the organization and use of terrains in case of marginal and formed or growing poor communities. As for housing, it is composed of two elements:

- A technical component expressed through safe distances, areas, terrain resources for community equipment.
- A social-educational component, able to explain the norms, safe distances, the way in which houses and annexes are located and the water supply managed.

The rational allocation of favorable terrains for human life, the presence of primary community equipment and observance of sanitary norms should lead to a simple, intelligible framework that can be easily applied, doubled by an effort to explain things and teach the community.

## Architecture

### Design Principles

The architectural approaches that could generate such constructions involve an adjustment to social conditions, to an economic standard the designer should understand directly, and to a culture of dwelling that should be necessarily sustained by the evolution without creating any crisis. The aesthetic dimension is secondary. The discourses about how the beautiful can change one's life, though respectable, are futile unless we understand the real situations and the pangs it creates.

As concerns the structural system and the constructive techniques, intermediary technologies are imperative (neither *high-tech* nor *low-tech*) along with local, artisan technologies. They involve a thorough guidance to reach high standard constructions with local labor force.

The design principles of emergency low-cost/social houses should not create huge differences between them and the vernacular ones. Their spatial-functional organization is simplified, without buffer spaces; there are few or none storage places, and the toilet is in the yard. The porch is present only in the countryside, echoing local architecture.

Here is the spatial and functional scheme showing the development stages:

1. a room with a stove in winter. The stove is moved outside in summer. Washing is done in the same room, according to seasons. In winter, there are almost no personal hygiene activities.
2. two rooms, one for parents and one for children. Cooking is done in the parents' room.
3. two rooms and a kitchen.
4. two rooms, a kitchen, and a bathroom.
5. three rooms: the parents' bedroom, one for girls and one for boys. Kitchen and possibly a bathroom.

The living room is not a priority, while separation on generations and sexes is urgent. Consequently, all rooms should be designed as to contain sleeping spaces correctly configured. The bathroom is way behind kitchen on the priority list. It is more important that you should not cook in the same place you sleep than to have a special place for a bath. The storage places are useless in cases of low, severe, and extreme poverty. They get a real role in improving living conditions on a higher level – that of “normal” poverty.

The tenants perceive them as being useless and instantly change them when they get such a “divided” house.

The Romany’s desire and habit to live only in one room has become a stereotype. It seems that the projects that have been proposed so far have established this stereotype. However, living in one room only, no matter how large that is, is not the Romany’s real desire but rather a solution to survive. Central heating leads to costs that cannot be covered by the beneficiary. The correct solution is to choose stoves. If you heat the rooms individually, you can choose from a variety of fuels. Transition to a higher level can be done gradually and when the household is ready for that. The central heating system can only eliminate the reduced income tenants or become useless when cut off. The running water installations are regularly done with low-cost materials and equipments. When used, they generate inaccessible maintenance problems. You’d better choose one sound, feasible tap for the whole household than face water leaks in many places.

However, at the community level, the presence of many water outlets is desirable. The electric installation is often too charged because improvised devices are used. The design should consider it. In this case, a double plug in each room is more than enough. This can be placed near the switch, by the door; thus, the circuits being short and cheap can be easily controlled.



### **The design theme**

When an intervention is done, the design theme should have the community description including the following elements:

1. community type

is established according to the chapter on communities

2. number of people

the total number points to the nature of the problem locally. Even if the intervention has been drawn up for just a part of the community, the designer should look to preserve the intervention chance for the entire community.

3. number of families (households)

the household structure (extended family) – by recording the generations and families, including each member and how they are related, husband/wife/grandmother/child. The aim of this action is to identify distinct family units that need distinct houses. This can be carried out by social inquiry, since it allows personal options. The stereotype “they like it so, to live together” is also marked. The truth is that younger generations prefer to live separately.

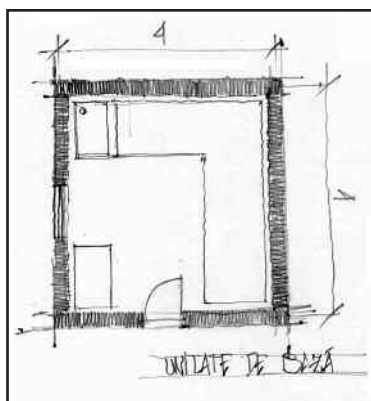
Having analyzed this structure, the designer will establish the number of houses and rooms for each house.

## 4. the condition of poverty for each family (tree table)

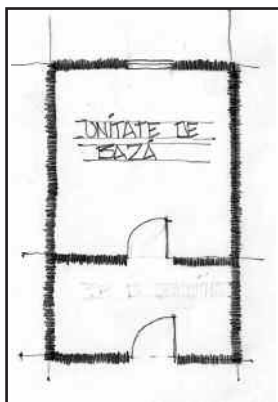
|                 |     |   |   |      |   |   |     |   |   |     |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----------------|-----|---|---|------|---|---|-----|---|---|-----|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nr. gospodării  |     |   |   |      |   |   |     |   |   |     |   |   |   |   |   |
| Nr. familii     |     |   |   |      |   |   |     |   |   |     |   |   |   |   |   |
| Nr. membri      | <10 |   |   | 7-10 |   |   | 4-6 |   |   | 2-3 |   |   | 1 |   |   |
| Nr. familii     |     |   |   |      |   |   |     |   |   |     |   |   |   |   |   |
| grad de sărăcie | A   | B | C | A    | B | C | A   | B | C | A   | B | C | A | B | C |
| Nr. familii     |     |   |   |      |   |   |     |   |   |     |   |   |   |   |   |

**Note:** the number of families is higher than that of households and it can be obtained by separating the households into basic families. The degree of poverty determines the level of equipment, finishing, and total floor area.

5. the legal status – if they have personal documents, property acts, rental contracts.
6. if they have animals
  - stables and any other annex belong in the household and cannot be placed in the fringe of the locality.
7. chronic ill people that need help, disabled, people suffering of psychic illnesses or in an advanced stage of alcoholism.
  - those presenting a risk of contamination should be hospitalized.
  - A particular attention should be drawn on those suffering from tuberculosis, a frequent disease in such communities.
8. personal options: vicinity, artisan activities, etc.



The distribution of basic family units according to members and degree of poverty should lead to a correlation between the number of people and number of rooms. Usually, this is done according to the Housing Act no. 114/97 that in Annex 1 contains a table with the number of rooms, minimal areas, and their distribution on the number of people. In the case of extreme poverty, such standards go well beyond the capacity of the authority to invest and the

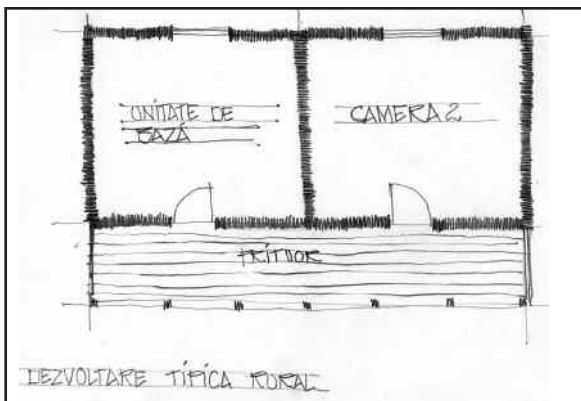


family to cover the costs. When the economic resources are too low and cannot possible cover the desired standards, the designer will evaluate critically the solution for each family and the community in general; thus, he will choose the solution that best fits the problematic of extreme poverty.

Obviously, we have to emphasize that the storage space or the buffer space are useless. However, considering that a sewerage main will be installed, the house should have a toilet in the yard. Again, we'd like to underline the fact that most people sleep near the cooking range, and so the families would rather have a kitchen than a bathroom. Yet, we don't recommend opened kitchens. There is no question to have a living room, in architectural terms, in this case. That is a sleeping area.

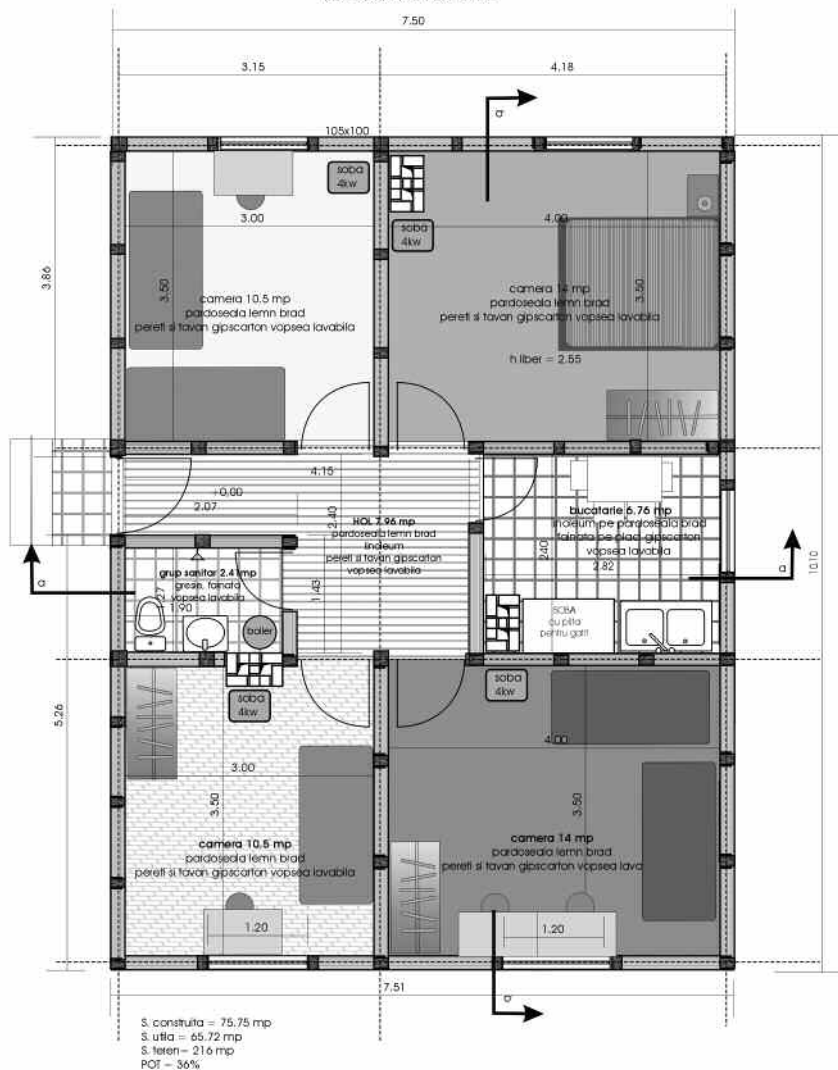
The basic unit in these communities is of 4x4 sq m. The next development level resulting from our research includes the addition of one more room and a kitchen-verandah, of small size. The multi-floor houses lead to problems of shared utilization. Preferably, one should design ground-floor houses with separate access. However, semi-detached or row houses could be devised there where there is a chance to connect to the utility main. Considering the nature of the case and the absence of land able to provide appropriate technical conditions and the wished for social inclusion, it is vital that we should save the amount of land we have.

Most of the poor Romany do not have well-defined ethnic or racial characteristics. Some of them, though totally marginalized by the Romanian society, no longer cherish their traditional values or speak the language. Ethnic identity can lead to architectural forms, especially in color and decoration, only from an average living standard. The bright color in the interior is the only way to show one's ethnic identity. However, the problem of specificity is open and necessarily includes that of local specificity, stronger in many cases.





# LOCUINTA 7-8 PERSOANE





**CASE STUDIES**  
**Dorohoi**  
**Satu Mare**  
**Tirgu Mures**  
**Cluj**  
**Geoagiu**

### **Interventions in Romania, examples New assisted buildings. Post-usage**

This chapter deals briefly with some examples of new houses built by either local authorities or humanitarian or philanthropic internal and international programs. The proposed examples are not the famous ones, as it is in Piatra Neamt and Zabrauti, yet they emphasize on some recurrent problems the building programs have to face in extremely poor communities.

In case of projects developed by local authorities, generally connected to relocation and eviction, the problems can be grouped as follows:

1. the use of inadequate land, not connected or poorly connected to the major locality (by the railway, on industrial sites or near waste storage places, etc);

2. the building commencement without previous basic utility system;

3. the house design according to area norms stipulated for minimal houses so as to be approved. This restriction drastically alters the functional distribution of houses and leads to post-usage problems that are not related to the initial norms. Thus, the equivalent of a studio apartment (kitchen of 8 sq m; one room of 18 sq m; hall of 8.2 sq m; bathroom of 3 sq m, with no



installation, waiting for community utilities) is inhabited by a 5-6 member family. The result is that they use the hall as a room and the bathroom as a kitchen.

4. the solution for emergency cases is the allocation of derelict constructions (as it is the case of the lockers of Orastie stadium, the hostels for single people, etc).

In the case of projects carried out by humanitarian or philanthropic organization, the post-usage evaluation shows that:

1. as a rule, the tenants do not finish the house they got (thermal insulation, plastering, the closing of the frame gables, exterior fittings, etc);
2. they build "survival cells" (of about 16 sq m) for the neediest of the community, on the place they had occupied, yet with no coordination according to a community plan;
3. there are no evaluations about post-usage. Little is known about present occupation and condition of the houses erected through external financing.

Cluj – Pata Rât 2 – str. Cantonului



## Dorohoi

### Field trip report

*This report was presented in October 2004 to the Ministry of Transports, Constructions and Tourism and to the Dorohoi Town Hall to inform about the actual state of affairs and to suggest the necessary actions regarding the Romany community situation.*

As a follow-up of the visit on site and of the presentation of some sketches regarding the objective "Social Houses for the Romany community" in Dorohoi I would like to present the following observations:

1. Regarding the terrain allotted by the Local Council for the objective:

1.1 The land is on the edge of the town but separated from it by an industrial zone. The area on which the Local Council intends to build, some 20.000 SQM, is covered with a significant quantity of industrial waste (glass, porcelain, cement). The only way to recuperate it for construction works is through a vast ecological programme. It is compulsory to have a study on the health conditions as the houses are supposed to be built in the industrial protection area, just nearby the glass factory, the residual water plant and some sewage disposal tanks.

1.2 The next primary school is at least 4 km away. This could prove to be difficult for the numerous children of the community.

1.3 There is no public transportation, public phones, public lighting, shops, sanitary institutions or churches around.

1.4 The main infrastructure is remote and the road is in very poor condition. There is a potential to extend the sewage system, the water and electricity network but the costs should be taken into account. Some of the people involved in the planning did not even visit the site. The location was never studied and has no urban planning regulations, as it is an agricultural field. This initial situation qualifies it as a segregation zone and not as an urban development area. It is necessary to have urban design studies to be able to develop it as a part of the town.

2. Regarding the houses proposed for demolition:

2.1 The façade of the former Jewish shops have a remarkable quality both in details and plaster condition. However, it is true that the backside of the houses is totally damaged. Though it is obvious that the necessary costs

for the preservation of the façade are not according to the local budget, we can only regret the demolition decision that the local engineers support. We suggest that the local heritage should be more carefully protected, at least for its ambiantal value.

2.2 The houses are not equally damaged. Some of them are still solid but some are a public threat. We met a person that had to undergo surgery after a piece of the falling ceiling hit him on the head. Many elements of the actual constructions are no longer attached properly on the main structure. They should be removed before the demolition, as people will continue to live there for a while. Even though they squat the buildings and have been prevented of the imminent danger it is our duty to prevent the accidents.

2.3 There are no public toilets, water, garbage platforms or lighting for the inhabitants. This leads to a sanitary disaster. The imminence of the demolition cannot justify the attitude of the authorities that recently cut off the last water resource of the community. It is urgent to reestablish public hygiene.

3. Regarding the Romany population:

3.1 The data about the total number and the household and family structure is incomplete. The initial estimation was 180 people; at a first count, they are almost 300. The actual levels of poverty inside the community are visible as distinct strata. The design should not consider them as a homogenous group but as a group of families and individuals with different needs. There are also some Romanian families in the houses, sharing the same economical and social situation.

3.2 There are some families whose houses are in good condition. They will easily adapt to any new conditions. There are also some families in deep need to be assisted, not only economically but from a medical point of view.

3.3 The Romany does not have a leader and no local representative. The local population is hostile and the authorities were indifferent and helpless in the last 15 years. The actual team is determined to change this but has no personnel and no strategies to integrate the community. Their recent experience is marked by police interventions and forced evictions, by the deportation of some individuals and the construction of a surrounding wall.

The only way to improve the situation and prevent future conflicts is by pro-

moting a social inclusion policy. It is necessary to have mediators, both in the local administrative structures and inside the community to achieve this long-term objective.

#### 4. Regarding the design principles:

4.1 Due to the lack of specific data, architects usually take the guidance of the Act of Housing. However, this special situation requires a non-standard solution. In order to adapt the project to the needs and to accord it to the budget it is necessary to accept a design that uses a simplified house with minimal surfaces according to the actual needs of the inhabitants. The houses should therefore be classified as emergency houses not as social houses.

4.2. The living experience of the community is that of half-collective housing. They have an urban background: they have very few animals and they do not cultivate the land. Individual housing could lead to a land use of approx. 20%. We need to generate an urban structure and to reserve some land for future developments.

4.3 The comparative analysis of three structural systems: masonry, wood panels and metallic structure led to the conclusion that the wood panels have a reasonable costs and are easy to use in winter time conditions.

4.4 We recommend that the toilets should be in the yard. An interior wet room will trigger initial costs in infrastructure and maintainance costs unbearable for the population.

4.5 The drainage can be done with ditches. The main investment in infrastructure should be done for the main road and completed with a public transportation facility that would equally serve the neighboring village of Broscauti.



## Emergency dwellings. Dorohoi, Botosani County

This project has been developed in the city of Dorohoi in response to the poor state of several buildings situated in the city centre in danger of collapsing. People living in those buildings were very poor, most of them Roma. The existing structures are in an advanced state of decay, including the bearing structure that displays multiple cracks in bearing brick walls, dampness, weakened roof bearing structure and roof cover, partial damage of foundation work, destroyed facades. Consequently, the houses existing in this area are dangerous, putting at real risk the life of people who live there and in the surroundings. Those buildings were catalogued as being in an advanced state of decay and unfit for use as dwellings by the Botosani Inspectorate for Building.



The information provided by the commissioner of this project states that in the above-mentioned buildings live approx. 360 persons. The commissioner's brief stated that the proposed project is intended to give accommodation to 180 persons on a first priority list. To solve this situation it has been decided to build a number of new emergency dwelling units so as to provide minimally acceptable lodging conditions for the people in need. Due to the fact that the majority of people exposed to such circumstances are Roma, this investment falls under the provisions of *The Strategy of Romanian Government for the Improvement of the Situation of Roma People*, approved by the Government and under the Law nr 116 of

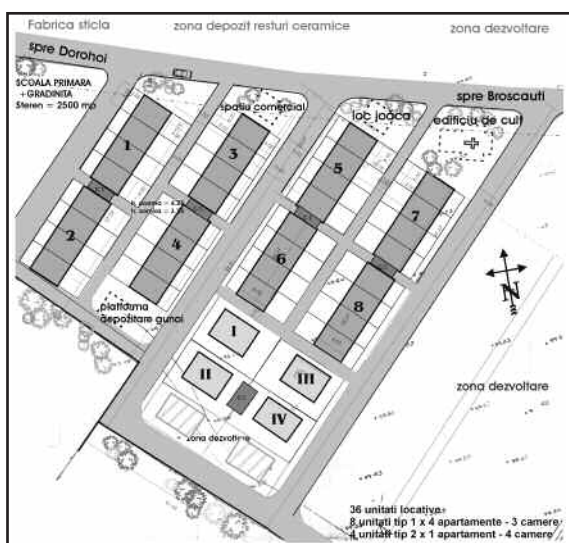
15 March 2022 on the *Prevention and Combating of Social Marginalization*. Implicitly, such measures are in compliance with the Recommendation of the Council of Europe nr. 17/2001 about the improvement of the economic and employment conditions of Roma/Gypsies and “nomads” in Europe adopted in 2001, November 27.

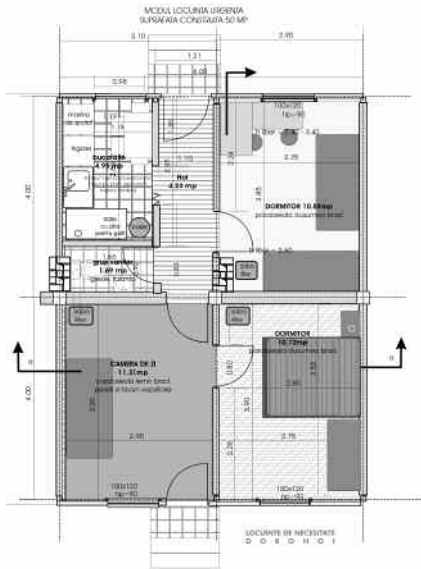
The chosen layout for the dwellings favoured the idea of sheltering as many persons as possible even if at minimal standards of comfort, in the hope that several equipment, finishing and sanitary fixtures will be provided later. The dwelling typology has been chosen as to fit the recent dwelling experience of the given group of people. The technical solution has been imposed by the very short delay for completing the construction, by the specific climatic situation in the area (harsh winters, low temperatures and heavy snowfalls) and last but not least by the necessity to build the project at a low cost.

The terrain chosen for the development is located on the road that links the City of Dorohoi to the Village of Broscauti and is the property of the Municipality of Dorohoi. The total surface designated for the project is 47.000 square meters, as the decision of the Local Council states, with no buildings on it. The current project unfolds on 8500 sq.m. and at the time of when the investment started there were no supplies of basic facilities such as electricity, gas and connection to City’s sewage centralized system. The place is located next to the City’s discharges treatment plant and to the greenhouses of the Municipality, on City’s fringes, close to the industrial area and to the Village of Broscauti.

The project comprises 8 structures with 4 three-rooms apartments each and 4 individual four-rooms maisonettes, 36 dwellings in all. The houses are 1 storey high and are aligned with a retreat of 5.5 m. as to the road.

The brief for this small complex included provisions on the construction of medium-standard dwellings destined to shelter the families whose houses were doomed for demoli-





tion. The architectural layout sought to provide as many dwellings as possible in order to house at least half of those in need. Under such circumstances, the regulatory authorities of the Ministry of Construction, Transportation and Tourism and of the Dorohoi City Mayor of 1<sup>st</sup>alty approved the construction of dwellings under standards of surface and equipment lower than the norms stated in the Annex 1 to the Law of Housing (nr.114/1996).

The development provides two types of housing.

The first is an apartment building one storey high with four apartments with wooden bearing structure made of vertical elements of 5x14cm and exterior walling of prefab wooden sandwich panels,

with mineral insulation, covered with gypsum-cardboard panels painted with washable paint. The roofing structure is in prefab panels of the same type as the walling panels and covered with shingles.

The four apartments are identical and, together with their small adjacent courtyards, are arranged in a row-housing complex.

The apartments are configured as follows: an entrance hall, a kitchen, a family room, two bedrooms and an inner bathroom. The hall provides access into the apartment and to its main rooms. The floor cover





is in linoleum. The kitchen is equipped with a metal kitchen sink and a gas-cooking device. Above the washbasin the wall is covered with ceramic tiles. There are electric plug-ins for a refrigerator and a washing machine. The bathroom has a toilet and a sink. A place for installing a shower is provided. The flooring and the walls up to 1.80 m. high are covered with ceramic tiles. The wall finishing in the family room and the bedrooms is in washable paint. There is one plug-in for electric devices and one electric lighting device in each room.

The water supply comes for the City's distribution network and the waste goes to the sewage-centralized system. The heating is centralized and provided by a small central supplied with solid combustible placed in between two housing units. The windows are with double glazed framing.

The second type – Four individual housing units, four/rooms each. Wooden bearing structure with exterior walling in wooden sandwich panels with polystyrene insulation. Interior walls – wooden bearing structure and OSB panelling.

Apartment configuration: an entrance hall, a kitchen, a family room, three bedrooms and a bathroom. The finishing and the supply of various appliances are the same as type described above.



The exterior finishing is in PVC sidings; the window framing is in white PVC with double-glazing. The courtyards have an alley paved with concrete tiles.

The garbage is collected in standardized PVC garbage bins. The proposed urban design arrangement allows planting some trees and as a protection from the industrial zone across the road and the nearby water waste processing plant. A fence will be put along the courtyards facing the road and street lighting will be provided. The constructions occupy 44% of the land surface for the type 1 and 36% for the type 2.



## Satu Mare

### Social housing - Toamnei Street. A project by Hans Linder Foundation

The inhabitants moved here from several vandalized apartment blocks that became inhabitable due to their advanced state of decay. In order to rehabilitate the buildings the inhabitants were placed temporarily in a number of social houses. Very few managed to return to their apartments after the rehabilitation.

The social houses are built on a former refuse depot of a hospital. Even now, the people there find syringes and medicine boxes, as a Roma woman recounted during an interview. This is very dangerous because those who found these items are usually children.



The case of the man pictured here is a good example for what happens when the authorities discontinue or abandons voluntarily such a programme. This man is diagnosed with schizophrenia and is permanently under tranquilizers prescribed by the doctors. His female companion never worked and they are not legally married. During a first period of their union, they had three children.

After leaving the grandmother's dwelling, (they became too numerous for the tiny place) they squatted an apartment in a block of flats. They are not willing - or are simply unable - to clarify the circumstances of this decision. They remained there for a while in conditions that were legal and very harsh - in their assessment - until the structure entered the rehabilitation works. The family was evicted and moved here while the man stayed in prison (he hit a man that died as a consequence of the blow). After being freed from prison, he returned to his family seven years ago. Since the pair got another seven children. Now they have ten children and live all together in a single room. All the money they have is spent on tranquilizing medication.

In this case, as in others of the same sort the main danger appears to be a possible demographic explosion that may happen there. Every relocation should be accompanied by an educational programme and dissemination of family planning information. It is well known that the number of desired children that Romany women expect to give birth to differs insignificantly from what other women do. The lack of knowledge in what are the basic tenets of birth control is obvious.

The dwelling units are made of a narrow vestibule, a bathroom equipped with a toilet, a shower and a sink and one or two rooms. The bearing structure is a timber skeleton with slender pillars and mineral insulation filling in between. The exterior walling is in wooden paneling; the interior finishing is in gypsum



cardboard panels. There is no hydro-insulation, and the socle is too low; consequently the lower part of the walls is wet and air in the house is damp. From the very first year after completion, the floors became moistened. The inhabitants get rid of the wooden floors and replaced them with a thick layer of cement.

The rats make tunnels in the narrow walls and the attic is full of cockroaches.

### **Vulturilor Street.**

The houses on Vulturilor Street reproduce the scheme of the barracks on Toamnei Street on a smaller scale, with a central heating unit in the middle of the cluster. Eight brick units expand the scheme. The standards are acceptable and remain within the narrow prescriptions of the Low of Housing. The apartments have correct surfaces, with a kitchenette and a bathroom and are inhabited by two families - one in each. All in all, there are eight persons living there.



## **Tîrgu Mures**

### **Valea Rece**

The local authority started building four apartments grouped in a single structure two storey high to shelter four families whose huts were demolished to make room for the new construction. Since the beginning difficulties arose when the provisions for the room-surfaces prescribed with the Law for Housing were applied as such to a standard one-room apartment.



Mr. Lenghel is the representative of the Valea Rece Community and at the same time is employed by the Mayoralty of the city. He is a hard-working and even-tempered person. Posses a three-room house purchased after the family left the apartment block. Nine people live in the house. Recently the elder daughter married and Mr. Lenghel gathered 20 million leis, and bought construction materials and erected a new house in the backyard. The house is of wooden structure with clay fillings, has no foundation is put on a cement platform, has a plinth and will be plastered. The ceilings are thermo insulated with mineral insulation slabs and the interior finishing is in cardboard-gypsum. This is a single-cell construction, has one door and one window and is a perfect illustration of the "basic living unit".

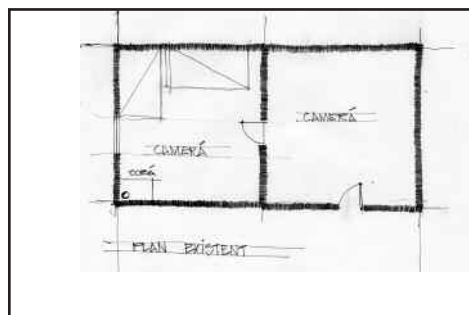
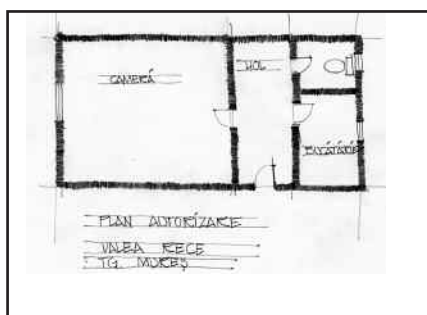


Even in a settlement made of huts, the new technologies are there. The owner of the house showed here occasionally works in Germany. It came home with the clear



idea that the polystyrene insulation is good and used it for his modest house. This is a rare example that shows clearly that people prefer to return back and live in their native community.

Another ad-hoc development that expands an old house. The space in



between will be filled with mortar and the roof will be completed when some more money will be found.

A house build by a foundation backed by the local authority. Here also the same problem of design emerges, even if it has been somehow corrected in the process: a “correct” studio with entrance, bathroom (even if there is no sewage) and a kitchen. When the future

occupant saw the way the walls were erected, he immediately tore them down, kept one single wall and obtained two large rooms with doors to the outside. On the ground floor live two families and other two are occupying the upper floor.



Three brothers that work abroad deal in “bisnita” – not very-regular businesses. They inherited the plot of land from their parents. This “heritage” is also somehow irregular, because

the land is owned in fact by the local authority and some other citizens that do not have papers. But 50 years of continuous occupation of the plot were sufficient to prompt them to invest in the “tiganie” (gypsies’ ghetto). Behind their property there is a striking row of earth huts.



## Dealului

The basic cell is a space of about 4x4 meters that shelters a single family. Sometimes this space is divided, but the usual procedure is to build an additional space. The rear door and the shape of the roof wait to be continued in the future.



The houses on Dealului Street are built of bricks, mostly found on demolition sites. The majority of the inhabitants worked once in a brick factory. The house pictured here is built by a couple working in Hungary. Obviously, their financial resources are higher than that of the rest of the community. The quality of the execution is also very good, they used better materials and the house stays on a foundation. That is not the only interesting thing about it; it is also noticeable as a model of phasing the construction.

Houses built by philanthropists from Scotland. The cost of such a “basic unit” is of 48 millions lei including the manpower. The plot of land is owned by the brick factory and the local authority accepts these constructions that have not been authorized and that could not be controlled and assimilated. The play ground for children is seldom to be found in other communities of this type.



## Cluj

### Str. Cantonului (Pata Rât 2)

The dwellings built by American and Dutch philanthropists are certainly helping a few families to survive but that is not enough to ensure the personal development of people living there. As a result of these shelters being built, the racial segregation has radicalized the community. Consequently, instead of solving the housing problem, the shelters are contributing to its permanentness.

This settlement artificially established by the local authority in an attempt to evict homeless

Romany people from the town is located at about 5 Km afar from the town's boundary. When the displaced people tried to build a toilet on the other side of the railroad, they have been fined and had to pay 5 million lei. But the plot of land they are supposed to live on is only 10 meters wide, so most people are crossing the railroad to relieve themselves in the open air, in the fields.

Inside the houses it is bitter cold. Sandwich walls made of double metal sheets with polyurethane insulation are insufficient and inefficient in this simplified configuration. The houses are given to people under a contract with the humanitarian Christian organization "Ecce Homo".





The houses are supplied with electricity, the bills being covered for a certain period by the local authority. There are two water sources, one for a group of about 20 houses made of wood and iron sheets, and a second other one, close to the area of improvised sheds.

There is one more sort of houses, of a type similar to those of Satu Mare. The houses have two rooms and each shelters two families.

### **Pata Rât – Dallas**

This is the most famous colony of Romania. It is monitored by the international organizations because of the children being forced to work in the waste pit. The community is important in size and atypical, being characterized by a strong inner hierarchy. One can notice this in the new buildings belonging to the chieftains of the communities and to the successful local businessmen. In addition, just across the main road, a humanitarian foundation built two structures in thermo-insulated metal sheets. One is the meeting hall of a neo-protestant denomination and the other is a community building with a para-medical center.

The houses are built of various materials, mostly of recycled bricks found in the garbage pit, expanded concrete blocks or wooden structures covered in plaster. The houses are visibly larger in size as ones in Targu



Mures, Is is possible that some of these houses are not permanently inhabited and are used as a sort of office for business dealings with recuperated materials.

The brick house shown in the picture belongs to the chiefs of the community. The interior finishing is in ceramic glazed tiles and flooring.





## Geoagiu

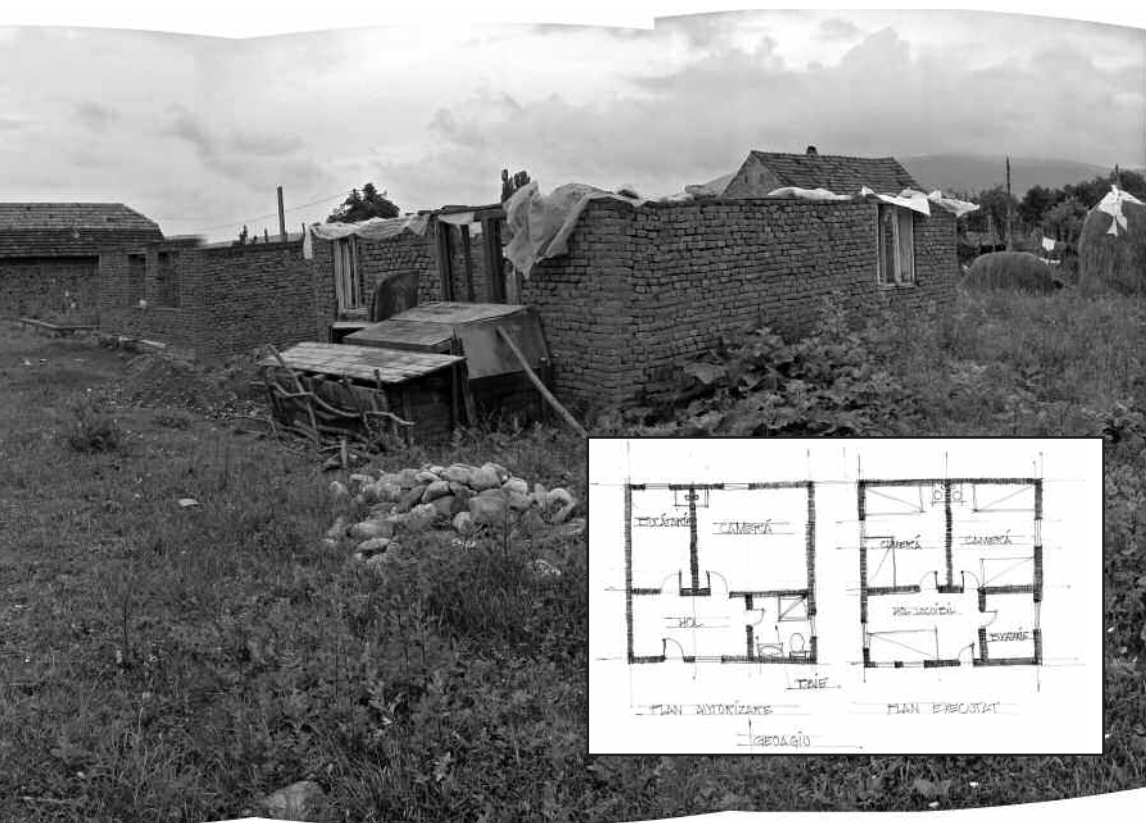


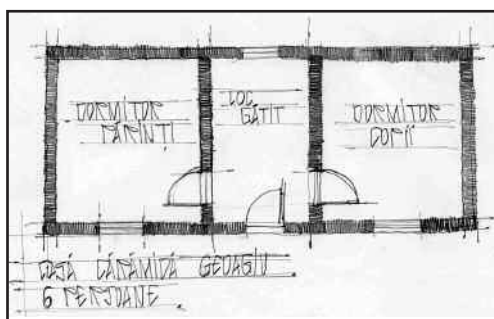
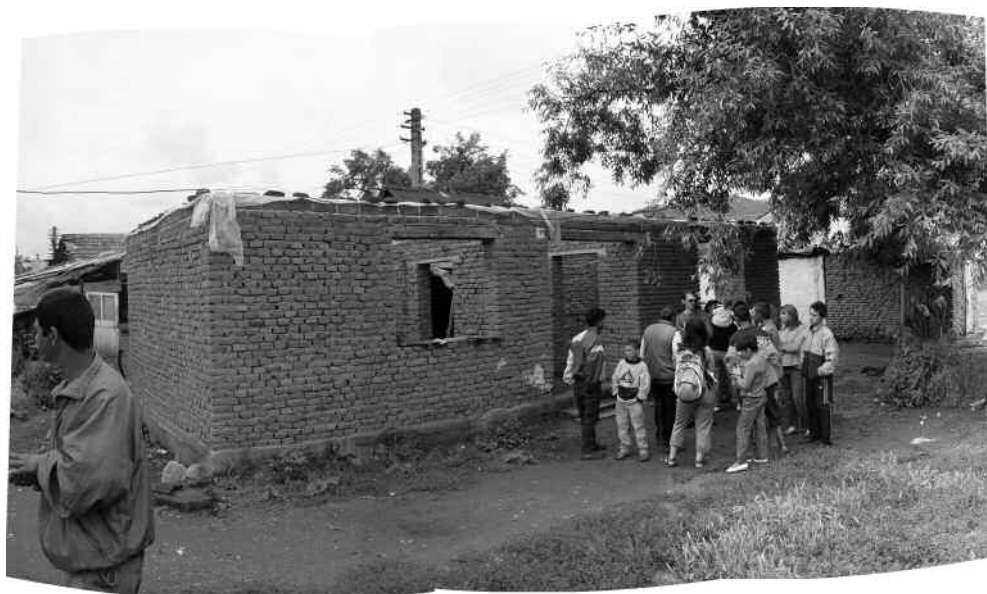


A large community of Roma people lives on the riverbank in the township of Geoagiu. The community is hidden behind a tall fence erected by the authorities in communist times “to protect the tourists”.

In 2003 a programme of housing for Roma people started. As in other examples, the initial layouts duplicate faithfully the provisions of the Housing Law. The results are easily predictable. Plans of correctly designed studios were remodeled into two-room apartments – an entrance with a place for a bed, the kitchen replaced the bathroom (no central sewage in the area) and an outdoor toilet.

In the meantime, the authorities’ assistance vanished. What was supposed to be a programme of social housing became a self-help construction initiative. Those Roma who are skilled in manufacturing bricks started building houses. Nowadays two houses are completed, other two are half-finished and seven more are in various stages – for some the foundation has been laid, for others the enclosing walls have been erected.





The newly built houses are located on the community's fringes, on a site that never has been built before. Inside the community there are scattered construction initiatives. In the picture below one can see the sole noticeable one. The house is made of "gipsy bricks", with clay mortar. On the upper perimeter is placed a continuous concrete beam slightly reinforced. In order to produce the necessary amount of bricks, the whole family worked for about one year. All the earnings coming from selling bricks were invested in other building materials. The plaster for the interior walls is of "slam", a residue of acetylene production cycle.

When compared with the rest of the community, that lives literally in the



mud, the interior pictured in the image looks as a huge leap forward, from extreme to a mere “decent” poverty. However this leap could possibly be completed only by young families, able to work hard and having few children.

This leap could be achieved through a rational and fair partnership with local authority. Good living quality is also attainable through stability, not necessarily through income growth.

Today's local actors seem to prefer forced evictions, *manu militari*, or the location of extremely poor people in ghettos. However, on a long-term that will lead to more and more people who build huts around Romania's cities. The first part of the solution would be the Romanian's awareness on the phenomenon. It is only after we all know what is going on that we shall find some decent solutions. Those who understood it, already found some.

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